

M U J I B

—*The Architect of Bangla Desh*

- Companion Volume :

BANGLA DESH—Birth of a Nation

by Yatindra Bhatnagar

M U J I B

-THE ARCHITECT OF BANGLA DESH

A Political Biography

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

THE life and dedication of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman has become known all over the world. The undisputed leader of 75 million people of Bangla Desh has also become a beloved and respected leader of freedom-loving people all over the world. He is not only a leader of men, a simple, dedicated and trusted mass leader, but has become the symbol of freedom, democracy and defence of people's rights. His life is an inspiration and his patriotism an example for the people all over the world.

Not much was known to the world about this dynamic leader of the Bengalis, both Hindus and Muslims, Christians and Buddhists in East Bengal till after the elections in Pakistan. The Sheikh, hailed by President Yahya Khan as the future Prime Minister of Pakistan, raised hopes of ending exploitation and emergence of a new era in Pakistani politics. But tragic events took place leaving the fate of the most popular leader in cruel hands.

Leaders like Mujib are not born every day. Men like him are rare on this earth. At the height of his popularity he commanded more love than many others who are no more, more respect than top leaders could hope to receive and more real influence as a non-minister than many Prime Ministers. His life is a

saga of dedicated service for the cause of freedom, human rights and democracy.

I have only translated one biography so far though have written biographical sketches of several men, but this is the first time I have been able to attempt a political biography. The reason for that is, first, my total emotional involvement with the struggle of Bangla Desh and secondly the persuasion of friends like Mr. V.P. Dhawan and Mr. Surendra Kumar Gupta, the printer and publisher respectively of this as well as my previous book *Bangla Desh—Birth Of A Nation*. I am thankful to them.

My friend Mr. J.K. Jain, Managing Editor *Avion*, has helped me immensely in the preparation of the manuscript in various ways. My wife, Mrs. Sadhana Bhatnagar, again came up with her numerous methods to keep me going with the hard work, which had to be completed in a short time. She helped me collect matériel, classify them and prepare the manuscript, forgetting her own 'operation art exhibition' the painting exhibition—her first 'one-man show'—she is working on. I will not be able to adequately thank both of them.

I am grateful to my friends Mr. K. M. Shehabuddin, Chief, and Mr. Amjadul Huq, Press Attache, of Bangla Desh Mission, and several other friends who gave me valuable suggestions and help from time to time and other assistance to see this book in print in such a short time. Whatever the shortcomings, I am responsible for them. If there are some good points about the book, I have no hesitation in confessing

that they are the result of valuable help given to me by well-meaning friends.

I must express my thanks to Miss N. J. Kaur, Information Officer, Press Information Bureau, and another friend Mr. Tarachand Jain, Photo Officer, of the Photo Division, Government of India for their valuable help.

This is by no means a comprehensive biography of Bangabandhu ; that could only be written after he is set free and, the dream of his life to see his people really free is fulfilled. And then, may be, I shall attempt to get a first hand account of all that the leader stood for, and all that he suffered for the cause so dear to his heart. That may be in the small two storey house in Dhanmundi in Dacca. I am waiting for that day and promise that if and when such a thing happens there would be a bigger, better and blameless biography of Bangabandhu.

I shall be glad to receive suggestions and comments about the book.

YATINDRA BHATNAGAR

September 13, 1971

*Liberty will not descend to a people :
a people must raise themselves to
liberty: it is a blessing that must be
earned before it can be enjoyed.*

—COLTEN

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PART I

Prologue

Mujib's Revolution

The Foundation and Early Life

In Gandhi's Footsteps

The Influence of Subhas

Partition and Contribution

The Seed of Revolution

Prologue

SHEIKH Mujibur Rehman is the name of a man who has hit the headlines in a short time and has adorned the cover pages of journals and remained there for longer than many others. He is the man who stirred an entire nation, shook the very foundations of the largest Islamic nation—Pakistan. His emergence was a shock to the ruthless rulers of Pakistan ; his leadership became stern warning to those who do not see the changing times and his enigmatic personality gave a nasty jolt to the military machine of Pakistan which never dreamt that the Bengalis could deal a death-blow to all their designs. Mujib indeed became a household word in East Bengal, India, and everywhere in every nook and corner of the globe where human values are maintained, where freedom is cherished and where exploitation is resisted.

Mujib is a magic word. Mujib is a miracle name. It is the clarion call for freedom, equality and secularism. Mujib is the symbol of new wave of nationalism. Out of the exploitation and dependence, out of the mistaken ideas of religion, a new path has been carved out, a new idea has spread. And, the new wave of indignation, resistance and struggle spread to every nook and corner of East Pakistan, turning it into East Bengal, then Bangla Desh and now Sovereign People's Republic of Bangla Desh.

No man in the entire history of modern world—except Mao for different reasons—has hypnotised his people as Mujib did. No man commanded so much love, respect and following as Mujib did. And no man suffered in

recent times for the love of his people, country and ideals as Sheikh Mujibur Rehman did and is still doing. So near was he from his goal and so far he has been pushed away by his tormentors but the goal is not lost sight of. The light that he kindled is burning brightly and may, we hope and pray, lead to the ending of all exploitation on this earth.

1

Mujib's Revolution

SHEIKH Mujibur Rehman is, in a way, a born revolutionary. With rebellion writ all over the place he was born in, was brought up, spent his student days and early life, nothing else could be expected from him. What Mujib gave to the world and his people was no doubt a revolution but it was, till a considerable time, a different type of revolution. It was revolution that is mostly understood by India and the Indians. The revolution given to India and the world by great teachers and leaders of ancient India as well as modern India. It was the revolution of Buddha, of Gandhi and now of Sheikh Mujib bred in that tradition.

Mujib is the product of non-cooperation movement and in later years made that his main weapon. He was also the product of stark naked communalism, and was a hard campaigner himself, but in his later days underwent a tremendous change to become a symbol of secularism, of Hindu-Muslim unity. From a fanatic Muslim to the hope for the people of other communities—other than fanatic Muslims—he became the apostle of tolerance and anti-communalism. The architect of Bangla Desh is a Muslim all right but he is far from being a religious bigot. His religion is confined to the four corners of his house and is limited to his own beliefs and religious practice for him and his own family.

Mujib's revolution, after Partition, was first confined to language—Bengali—for as all democrats should do, he was for the language of the masses, the majority of the people. For the love of his language he displayed

the guts to stand up to the architect of Pakistan, none other than Qaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah. A fearless crusader, Mujib did not hesitate to defy the Father of Pakistan at a time when his popularity was at its peak and none in Pakistan could dare oppose Jinnah. That was his first major revolt against the establishment in Pakistan and was the beginning of many others.

Sheikh Mujib is not a revolutionary of the modern specie who has made it his profession. They advocate revolution for revolution's sake. They talk more about the revolution but practice less. But Mujib is different and there is hardly any dividing line between what he preaches and practices. When he accepted non-violence as his creed he stuck to it, even when it meant hardships and privation. What else can a down-trodden people do in the face of stiff-necked military maniacs? In any case this non-violent method of his was not born because he could not take to violent methods. Bengal has been famous for its violent approach. The revolutionary movement of India was led by firebrand Bengalis and bomb-wielding extremists. Even now it is so in West Bengal. In East Bengal, in Bangla Desh, the method was changed only because circumstances changed. And even then Mujib's orders were not to touch innocent people of any caste or faith or province. His men are only fighting the ruthless army, the army of occupation and in this struggle armed conflict was inevitable and the only answer to the genocide. Militarists do not understand any other language. They are accustomed to get tit for tat and that works. Mujib would have liked to see non-violence and non-cooperation triumph but the ruling Junta in Pakistan has never enjoyed a reputation for grace, civility and dignified behaviour. So be it and they are getting it in the same coin. But once the enemy is driven out from Bangla Desh. I am sure, like Gandhi, and his teachings, Mujib.

and his men will forgive the blood-thirsty troops of Pakistan who waged a ruthless war on unarmed and innocent people of Bangla Desh. But that can wait a little !

Mujib's revolution has other and not less significant aspects also. His struggle was and is against exploitation, political, economic and religious. Mujib's credo is freedom, freedom from exploitation and freedom from domination by a minority, that too military junta. He is a democrat—basically and fully—not a basic democrat as ex-Sadar Ayub and his one-time close friend and associate Bhutto claimed. That style does not suit him. That style really does not do credit to any one. Mujib is for democracy—universal style—and he is fighting and suffering for that. He knew that autocracy and dictatorship do not deliver the goods, are not valid in present-day world and do not end people's sufferings; on the other hand multiply them and as a result find their own exponents in thick soup. No doubt for a time these anti-people activities of the handful may seem to succeed but the ultimate victory belongs to the people. Mujib is firmly rooted to this idea and so are the people of Bangla Desh who are fighting against heavy odds. Sheikh Mujib himself said on this subject : 'They may have money, they may have influence, they have the capacity to use force against the people. History, however, testifies that determined people can successfully resist and overcome such forces of oppression.'

Mujib's revolution has another very significant characteristic—it is secular. Hindus, Buddhists and Christians have plunged themselves into it and have been fighting shoulder to shoulder with other Muslim followers of the Sheikh. It cut across religious affiliations and united the whole of East Bengal and its people such as never witnessed before, not even when India was fighting the British. This non-communal unity of the

people was achieved by Mujib and his revolution and till this day Pakistani mastermind in intrigue has not been able to find significant collaborators and all attempts to give the Bangla Desh revolution a communal turn have hopelessly failed to give to the rulers of Pakistan what they desired and engineered. All that does go to the credit of Mujib. There was a tradition of religious tolerance in Bengal but during and after the partition things had changed, and its impact on communal minds did not die soon. It is indeed a creditable achievement for Mujib and his Awami League to free the people's minds of the utter stupidity and futility of communalism. That was one of the major gains of the struggle of Bangla Desh.

The much trumpeted Two-Nation theory as advocated by Muslim League and Jinnah has been buried deep under the heaps of hundreds of thousands of corpses in East Bengal. Islam has failed to keep together the two wings of one country—howsoever artificially it was made. It was proved beyond any shadow of doubt that religion cannot be the basis of political unity. Islam cannot be the binding force in modern-day world like Christianity which has not been able to prevent world wars. As a matter of fact religion has lost all the unifying element it is supposed to have beyond a certain limit. Mujib and his revolution has contributed a lot to have this new situation where one does not live by religion alone, does not thrive by religion and religious bonds alone. In this political set up and in this modern conception of state religious bonds are fragile. I am writing all this in spite of the fact that most of the countries of Arab and Muslim world have more or less sided with Pakistan and ignored the aspirations of other Muslim dominated people, but that too proves my point. Firstly, that unholy alliance for Pakistan is not out of deep religious affinity—for East Bengalis are also mostly

followers of the same faith—it is because of fear of democracy and democratic ideals taking roots in those countries also. Secondly, they are misled and ill informed about the whole thing. Not many of their envoys take the trouble to find out for themselves the real situation and many of them have a one-track mind. To a jaundiced eye everything will look yellow and it is very very difficult to cure this self-acquired and self-imposed disease. But I am not that pessimistic, events of Bangla Desh have adequately given the correct jolt to these so-called fraternal feelings and the fanatics among the religious-oriented states have, in due course, to see things in clearer perspective. They knowingly keep up a facade of religious fraternity and affinity for fear of a democratic storm breaking out in their territories. But that will not be long before it breaks out, for Mujib has sown the seeds of secularism and democracy

Mujib's revolution is unique in many ways as I have said in the previous pages. It was not only non-violent in the beginning but free from any rancour and ill will against the general public of West Pakistan to pamper whom East Pakistan was being exploited. It was also comparatively free from anger towards the other inhabitants from other far away provinces who have made East Bengal their home. Sheikh Mujib himself was far-sighted enough to sense that there were enough provocations for the Bengalis and the situation could be explosive for the non-Bengalis. He gave express orders and clear instructions on the subject. Howsoever the military machine of Pakistan try, the right thinking and the ones who could see through the perfect Pakistani propaganda, will come to the conclusion that Mujib's was almost a fool-proof secularism and pre-March 25 events were not the result of Bengalis harassing the non-Bengalis. Pakistani martial law authorities have been trying their best to make out a case for intervention by the armed

forces saying that because Bengalis had assaulted non-Bengalis the army went out to restore law and order. This was a blatant lie and a hollow pretext and to uncover it none need supernatural powers.

That was all because of the teachings of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rehman. And his words were the law.

Mujib had sown the seeds of another significant revolution which in due course may or may not benefit Bangla Desh but is certainly going to liberate West Pakistan. This struggle of Bangla Desh is not only for liberation of East Bengal from the ruthless military clique of Gen. Yahya Khan; this is, in larger context, a struggle for the liberation of all those who are suffering under the colonial regime. It is designed to raise the banner of revolt against all sorts of exploitation and denial of democracy. In the victory of this struggle lies the salvation of other parts of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the other areas still languishing under imperialist yoke.

That it will help usher in the era of democracy for the other parts of Pakistan is undeniable. There are signs of unrest, renewed upsurge in Sind, Baluchistan and NWFP. Bangla Desh is showing the path to freedom, democracy and establishment of a just social and economic order. Speaking to a large gathering of Pressmen while releasing my previous book *Bangla Desh—Birth of A Nation* Defence Minister Jagjivan Ram made it very clear. He said:

'...the struggle for free Bangla Desh will help in liberation of the other parts of Pakistan; it will go a long way to free them from military rule and for the establishment of democracy in West Pakistan.'

These are significant words and coming from the Defence Minister they deserve more attention than is customarily given to speeches at book release functions.

If and when that happens the credit for all that will undoubtedly go to Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, Bangabandhu as he is widely known in East Bengal. That is the meaning of the struggle in Bangla Desh. This then is the true significance of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman. That is Mujib's revolution. It was started on modest note gathered storm mid-way and now, inspite of innumerable handicaps, has assumed proportions the like of which have never been witnessed by anyone anywhere in the world.

Mujib has also given the oppressed and exploited Bengalis a new sense of pride, nationalism and has awakened the East Bengalis to a pitch where it is impossible to succumb to pressures and pulls. This is indeed the Bengali Nationalism the wave of which has swept the entire land of Bangla Desh and has swept the opponents off their feet. That's why it has been very very difficult for Yahya Khan and his henchmen—and henchwomen if I may use the term for, there are a few—to get hold of a significant number of quislings and set up a puppet government. That was all due to the Bangabandhu whose word had become law in East Bengal and whose writ ran large in the entire country, the Eastern country. It was that same spirit that inspired the Chief Justice of Dacca High Court to refuse to administer the oath of office to the military governor Tikka Khan. History does not have many examples of such boldness on the part of those who are generally regarded as un-revolutionaries; who are not expected to go out of their way and break the rigid rules, conventions and practices prevalent at the time. Judges, they say, do not realise the way wind blows and are in the habit of giving judgments against the trend of the present times. But there are people who inspire the others, even judiciary, to rise to greater heights and take revolutionary steps and there are people who obey the

leader of the masses as their own undisputed leader. That was the unique revolution of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman and that was the impact of it on the entire people of Bangla Desh. Such a revolution has to succeed for it is Mujib's revolution—unique in conception, exemplary in character and inspiring in content.

The Foundation and Early Life

MUJIB became a revolutionary at an early age and has continued since then without a break. It is no mean achievement to have been imprisoned by one's own government for political and ideological 'crimes' for a total of about ten years out of twenty-three that the 'own state' was in existence. The path leading upto the jails and back in politics and among receptive people is the real story of Mujib and his ideas as they grew, matured and spread.

Sheikh Mujibur Rehman was born at a time when India was struggling to free itself from the British yoke. Jallianwala Bagh of 1919 was over but the impact it had created on the minds of the Indians was still there and the political leaders, unlike today's, were really and sincerely putting their heads together to find new and more effective ways of driving the British out of this country. The whole atmosphere was as surcharged with violent patriotic fervour as was a few years later and the seeds that Gandhi, Tilak, Lala Lajpatrai and Bipin Chandra Pal had sown were sprouting. The soil of Bengal is very fertile and revolutionary ideas do not take a long time to firmly take roots and to blossom at the first opportunity.

Mujib's was not a revolutionary background but whatever ideas, emotions and inspiration he got were not only self-acquired but became infectious also. The foundation of his revolutionary career was well and truly laid at the feet of masters like Fazlul Huq, Suhrawardy and, in a way, Subhas Chandra Bose. They-

were tall leaders in their own right and in their own way. Judging some of them now in totally changed and unrelated circumstances might not do justice to them but the fact remains that all of them did try to serve a people, a cause and an idea in their own way. Sheikh Mujib was inspired, stirred and electrified by whatever was current those days and it was none of his fault that the currently popular theme for a young Muslim was Pakistan and how to achieve it.

In many ways than one the foundation on which Mujib based his early views was religion for the achievement of political aims. Nationalism, pure and simple overthrow of the foreign domination, had given way to Muslim nationalism or desire to have a homeland for the Muslims carved out of 'India of the Hindus.' Sir Mohammad Iqbal had given call for the Muslim homeland and sang the praises of Muslim state where the Muslims could live for full and free development on the lines of his own culture and tradition. It was not the intention then of Iqbal, or some of the others sharing his ideas, to have a separate homeland for the Muslims outside the British Empire. This was for the Muslims of the North-West India and ignored those of Bengal, a 'tradition' later kept up by every North-Western Muslim before and after Partition. And this was the reason and justification for the upheaval in East Bengal and for Mujib to become President of Bangla Desh, even in his absence.

The Simon Commission, the Round Table Conferences and the Communal Award of 1932 were all there to influence the political atmosphere everywhere in India and Bengal. The Communal Award had, naturally, not satisfied anyone. The Hindus of Bengal were bitter that the Europeans as a minority were given undue weightage while they were denied their right of protection again as minority.

In any case Sir Mohammad Iqbal and later student leader Chaudhuri Rahmat Ali had made a case for Pakistan which did not include Bengal and which was confined to North Western India. Much later it was enlarged to include the forgotten Muslims of Bengal also but as things stood then Bengal was not destined to be a part of Pakistan but rather a separate Muslim unit in the East.

Things were moving in a haphazard manner without pre-determined ideas and a proper plan of the Muslims and by their so-called leaders. But all the plans and suggestions were heavily weighted in favour of Muslims of North West. Later when Bengal was also recognised as Muslim dominated and the Government of India Act, 1935, gave more weightage to Muslims in the provinces Bengal also got its share. But circumstances at the central level, the level of Jinnah and the All India Muslim League, were such as to make the provincial leaders subservient to the All India leaders even if they were not part of the Muslim League and were not obliged to accept Jinnah as their supreme leader. In 1937 A.K. Fazlul Huq had formed a coalition ministry in Bengal with substantial gains for his Krishak Proja Party. That there were inherent weaknesses in Huq's coalition was evident and the conflict between the landed aristocracy and the common peasant was inborn. In any case all India politics was shaping the destinies of the provinces and the Bengal leader also had to accept the Muslim League and Jinnah his leader though his was a distinct party professing more radical programme than the League could think of ; it was like a modern day socialistic policy but circumstances forced Huq to toe the line of Muslim League at the national level. Thus a national Muslim leader in Jinnah had emerged which, obviously, was not liked by Huq and other provincial

leaders of different parties. But they had little choice and had to gulp this bitter pill.

Fazlul Huq could never fully reconcile to the situation he was perforce caught in by the circumstances. He could not tolerate the autocratic behaviour of Jinnah who was assuming the position of all India leader and that too an undisputed one. Huq said in one of his statements : 'The genius of Bengali race revolts against autocracy and I could not, therefore, help protesting against the autocracy of a single individual.' Much later Huq said similar things in the Assembly when he charged that the state government does not mean provincial autonomy and that the 'dictates of dictator ignored the real feelings of the people.' Indeed Fazlul Huq was aggrieved. He, and not Jinnah, had a sizable following in Bengal and even with that he, by force of circumstances, had to bow before destiny. As events were shaped, Jinnah became the undisputed leader of Muslim League and Muslims of India. There was no way out.

The demand for a separate homeland for the Muslims was gaining ground and the British were fanning the fire of communal conflict. Bengal and Bengali Muslims had developed a fancy for Pakistan and by the time partition came they had enough strength to tilt the balance in favour of Muslim League and bring about the partition of the country.

This was the background in which Mujib was born, grew and had his initiation. It was impossible to remain unaffected by things happening in the neighbourhood and in the province. All that happened in early twenties may not have had a personal impact on the child but whatever took place in the thirties and the forties shaped his ideas and subsequent political activities.

Mujib was born in Tangipara village in district Faridpur of East Bengal. His birth date is under doubt.

some maintain it is March 17, 1920* and others give it as March 22, 1922. I have accepted the latter as it seems to be more in conformity with other landmarks in his life. In any case he is not an old fashioned obscurantist unaffected by modern ideas and firm commitment to democracy. Mujib is around fifty with an impressive record as an active youngster.

Sheikh Mujibur Rehman's parents, both were alive when the flare-up started, are simple people. Sheikh Lutfur Rehman worked at the courts as an ordinary employee, but had some lands to which he fell back after retirement from the courts. They were not much active in politics, specially Mujib's mother, but father also was not much concerned about it either. The only feelings that they had were that their son was doing good work for the people and his stand is right. Even without being involved in active politics, like many other crores of people in Bangla Desh, the parents of Mujibur Rehman are reported to have been harassed and tortured. Father Sheikh Lutfur Rehman is 90 and mother was ailing but the military brutes of Pakistan raided Tangipara and set upon the parents of Mujib—their biggest target. No further news of the two has come. The parents of would-have-been Prime Minister of Pakistan and the President of Sovereign People's Republic of Bangla Desh are undergoing torture for their only crime of giving birth to the undisputed leader of seventy-five million Bengalis of East Bengal and many more in several countries.

Mujib, in early life, was influenced by his father whose two traits of character he still regards as exemplary: honesty and forthrightness. These two, and many more, are there in ample measure in Sheikh Mujibur Rehman himself.

*1919 according to Bangla Desh Information Office in New Delhi.

Sheikh Mujib is also known widely as Bangabundhu. That is his quality—the feeling of brotherliness with every one. He is true brother for his people, be he a fisherman, or a peasant or a judge. Even for Pakistani soldiers he did not express any hatred, in true Gandhian fashion. In his childhood his playmates were mostly from the lower strata of society. Sometimes the very poor also came and played with him and on many occasions he played the role of aid giver and the aid that he gave was paddy which was abundant in his cellars. At times he would not inform anyone and would distribute bags after bags of paddy to the needy children. Not that he needed some bouquets from the friends but his philosophy was that 'I feel immense pleasure when I see smiles on some one's lips'.

Mujib, when he was still in his early teens, had organised alms collection drives for the poor and the needy. That campaign of his attracted much attention enabling several poor students to pursue their studies. That has influenced his later day life also and helped in no small measure to amass so much popularity that began to threaten the unpopular military might of Pakistan. The fact that three top leaders of Pakistan, Jinnah, Ayub and Yahya Khan, called him 'enemy' and 'traitor' shows how much he is the man of the common people; though that's a crime in Yahya's Pakistan.

None recalls having seen Mujib in a western style suit and tie. His usual dress is long flowing punjabi* and pyjama and a jacket—used to be called Jawahar jacket in India—and all that of course is not imported. The only imported thing that he himself uses is probably the pipe he smokes. It is probably not being made in Pakistan or he would have definitely used that.

Mujib since his childhood was attracted towards

*In Bengal, *kurta* is called 'Punjabi'.

politics and the struggle against oppression. At seven he went to a formal school and started taking part in agitations. Once he was sent to prison for seven days for the crime of attending a political meeting. Pakistan was not there. It was all British India but it was no different than Pakistan of forty years later.

Mujib might be able to recall those seven days in prison but I am sure they were just a vacation as compared to what inhuman torture he is reported to have been suffering these days in Pakistani jails. Mujib then was a mere lad but now has a status incomparable in modern day world, yet he has to undergo torture and the world is not bothered, the so-called civilised governments are more concerned about protocol and international norms.

Young Mujib graduated just in the year of partition of the country. But before that, and immediately after, he played an active and significant role in politics.

Ever since Mujib realised that he should do something to serve the cause and the society to which he had become dedicated, he activated himself and started participating in as many meetings as possible. He was only a student then and the activity that he preferred was at first more of a social nature than political. But he could not help because events so shaped his and his country's destiny that it was hardly possible for anyone of Mujib's temperament to keep aloof from all that.

Mujib went to Calcutta in 1942 and joined Islamia College, true to his then affinity and religious fervour. He was instantly caught in the student politics of those days—not very much different from today's—and soon was acknowledged as the foremost leader of the students. He was even then a simple and polite young man without false airs and this was the quality that endeared him to his fellow students. Mujib was an

activist on behalf of the Muslim young men and under the influence of H. S. Suhrawardy he became more active in Muslim Students Federation.

As a young leader of the young people he had earned a name for resistance politics and soon caught the fancy of the elders also. In 1944 Mujib was devoting most of the time to organise the students as Muslims should be. He had gathered a dedicated band of Muslim students who could do anything for Mujib. He had, of course, no intention to side with those Muslim leaders who were only interested in getting power, be it within the British Empire or outside it. Mujib was for an independent state, outside of British India, for he was an ardent nationalist from the beginning and had suffered at the hands of colonialists.

In 1944 when Mujib was the secretary of Faridpur district committee, the President of the committee decided to accord a civic reception to the Governor. Mujib was totally against such a demonstration of loyalty to the British. He announced at the meeting of the committee his intention to dissociate from the reception. Eventually the reception was given up; Mujib had won a point.

Mujib was active on 'Indianisation'. At Gopalganj, he took part in the agitation for the removal of the statue of Sir Holwell who was regarded as the deadly enemy of Indian independence movement. Mujib was hailed as the prime mover of the 'operation removal' project.

Sheikh Mujibur Rehman knew his strength lay in students and the intellectuals and that is true to this day. Pakistani crackdown was basically on the intelligentsia who was combed out, killed or driven away. But as an active campaigner Mujib knew since his early days that the real inspirers of any movement are the students and the intelligentsia and he became

their organiser, their mouthpiece and leader.

Mujib qualified as a graduate from the same College in 1947 and soon plunged into another kind of politics that pervaded among the young Muslims—that of gaining a homeland for the Muslims.

In his student days Mujib looked rather unkempt, though even now he is not given to ostentations and the so-called impeccable westernised dress and demeanour. But those were indeed days when every political and revolutionary student ignored the personal make-up, dress and hated showing off of wealth; in any case Mujib did not have that much to make a show of it.

Mujib was then not a very fluent, firebrand speaker but he did command respect because of his sincerity and attracted attention because of his dedication to the causes he decided to take up, be that the removal of Sir Holwell's statue or defence of his language, Bengali. Not that he was parochial in his outlook but that he recognised the importance of the cause, the wide use and richness of Bengali and the correctness of his stand. In that he feared none and spared none.

Right after he had decided to support the idea of Pakistan, he had started advocating for an ideal Pakistan. He wanted to see his Pakistan an ideal state, where democracy would reign supreme and the rule of law prevailed. Little did he know that Pakistan was going to be a state where democracy would be strangled, patriots shot dead, innocents locked up in jails and human values trampled under foot.

The rebel in Mujib could not see exploitation anywhere, much less in the state that he campaigned for. Mujib wanted to see Pakistan free from exploitation by big powers and that there was no exploitation within Pakistan itself. He was deadly opposed to exploitation of any kind—political, social or economic.

It was a pity that Pakistan suffered all types of exploitation and East Pakistan suffered more than the West. After a period it was West Pakistan that started the exploitation of East Bengal. But in a way this had really started the day Pakistan was born.

The rebel student had also made up his mind—and he used to say it clearly before his audience also—that after the establishment of Pakistan there was no room for communalism of the past. After all, he thought, Muslims wanted a homeland for themselves, where they would be in a majority and now they had got it. There was no point in harassing the minorities once they had adopted Pakistan as their country and were living as law-abiding citizens. They were following the laws the majority in their wisdom had framed for them. As loyal citizens they were entitled to all the protections and safeguards under the law.

By espousing these non-communal theories Mujib could have become unpopular among a small section of the people. But Bengalis are not stark communal in their basic outlook. This may be one of the reasons that they were being looked down upon by the 'thoroughbred' West Pakistani Muslims. Mujib had also realised it but it had strengthened his faith in secularism and democracy, equal rights and freedom for all.

Sheikh Mujibur Rehman also sincerely believed that in his new state of Pakistan poor people would find ample scope for development, irrespective of their caste and creed. He fought for them and he suffered for them. Since his early days Mujib had the traits of character fit for a mass leader. He possessed all the qualities of a leader born to bring hope and succour to the masses and to raise them to the level of respectability. Mujib did all that in his own way and attained an amount of popularity rarely enjoyed by kings and presidents, saints and movie stars. He combines in

himself the qualities of a true leader who is prepared to sacrifice everything, even his life. In a way these qualities were responsible for Mujib finding himself in the clutches of Yahya's bloodthirsty militarists. He could have gone underground, but no, not Mujib, because, firstly, he is a political leader not a guerilla and, secondly, Mujib cared more for his people than for his own life. He thought, and may be rightly, that his going into hiding would result in more ruthless suppression of his people as a revenge for his slipping away. The decision may be right or wrong but there is no doubt that it was prompted by his genuine desire to save his people from sure revenge, which in any case did come as carnage.

3

In Gandhi's Footsteps

MAHATMA GANDHI had said: 'It's greater sin to tolerate injustice than to do it'. Sheikh Mujibur Rehman has faithfully followed that. It is immaterial if you put on *khadi*, take to spinning or use hand-pound rice; one may do these things or not but what is essential is that you live up to the teachings. And these teachings are not the copyright of Mahatma Gandhi and for that matter people like Mujib are not necessarily labelled as Gandhians but the essence of the matter is that Mujib and his followers adopted the same policy for the expression of their grievances which was followed in India by Mahatma Gandhi. In the United States, the late Dr. Martin Luther King had also followed the Gandhian method of registering his protest against injustice. Same was the story in East Pakistan, East Bengal and now, in Bangla Desh; it is the perfect synthesis of the two—Gandhi and Subhas Bose.

What Mahatma Gandhi preached was universal and Sheikh Mujib is a true follower of the essentials of those teachings. It is not essential that one has to be a follower of the Man. In India, the present-day leaders who are not tired of uttering Gandhi's name day-in and day-out follow none of the teachings of the great man in their private or public life. But Mujib is different. He followed the teachings without enrolling himself as a disciple or claiming himself to be 'a close associate of the Mahatma', yet it is difficult to find a truer follower of Gandhian philosophy than Mujib. He has done it and is still doing it in letter and spirit.

Gandhiji preached love for the fellow human beings.

He advocated a non-communal and secular approach. Gandhiji's life was spent to uplift the masses from their miserable plight and he steadfastly adhered to his creed of non-violence. One of his favourite methods to achieve the goal of independence was non-cooperation which he practised in India. I think none else has practised non-cooperation and non-violence so faithfully as Mujib has. And when he was inclined to adopt other methods also he was not going far from Mahatma Gandhi who had accepted a more pragmatic and effective approach to attain the goal of independence. When Gandhiji said about injustice and tolerating it as a bigger sin he exactly meant that. In 1942 when Indian people rose in revolt against the British and raised the slogan of 'Quit India', whatever the people did in the absence of the leaders was acceptable to Gandhiji. He did not condemn violence by the oppressed people against the military might of the tyrant. I am sure had Gandhiji been alive today he would have wholeheartedly supported the movement and the freedom fight in Bangla Desh and would have hailed the role of Mukti Bahini as a non-violent one. To him it was non-violence if in self-defence the lamb resisted the wolf. This is exactly what is happening in Bangla Desh.

Mujib had differed with the ways of the Mahatma during the late thirties and early forties. He was a student in those days but he was active in politics in his own way. Mujib had followed Subhas but that was also not at variance with the basic policy enunciated by Mahatma Gandhi. As a matter of fact I think that the clash between Gandhi and Subhas was not so much on policies as is made out. It was plainly a clash of personalities and in case of Mujib there was no such clash. The result was that he could evolve a synthesis, a harmonious blend of the two methods suiting the occasion and that did work.

Mujib roused his people as Gandhiji did. The simplicity was there, though not of the loin-cloth type. The love for Swadeshi is evident and it is said that the only thing foreign in Mujib's possession may be the pipe he smokes. He became a mass leader as Gandhiji had become. People love him as they loved the Mahatma and could follow him blindly. They demonstrated unbound faith in Gandhiji and similarly Bengalis have immense confidence in Mujib. In one aspect the charm of Mujib had even surpassed that of the Mahatma; he could take the entire administration and judiciary with him in his struggle; Gandhiji could not accomplish that in entirety.

Mujib is a mass leader and does not believe in ivory tower politics. He is neither an arm-chair political leader nor a pseudo-intellectual political thinker and theoretician. He is a true mass leader who has his roots in the deep soil of his country and in his people. He is as dedicated as anything and the indomitable courage that is the hallmark of a true leader is apparent in him.

Mujib is a great organiser. He demonstrated it amply since the day he led a small group of 12 year olds in Faridpur to stone the police station because policemen did not allow a political meeting to be held in the area. That was the beginning of a series of events which went to prove his great organisation skill and his success in moulding 'Bheetu Bengalis' into indomitable freedom fighters. Not that the Bengalis have ever lacked in courage—the history of India's freedom movement is full of the heroic deeds of people of that region.* But things could have been different in Pakistan which was formed with massive support from Bengal and Bengali Muslims. It is a job to rouse the same people against

*Prime Minister Indira Gandhi said in Lok Sabha on August 11, 1971 : "... It had contributed more revolutionaries to India than, any other part of the country."

the same government the setting up of which has gone down in history as the greatest triumph of Muslims of the sub-continent.

At twenty Mujib was an accepted organiser and a responsible student leader who thought coolly and worked resolutely. That is the test of a mass leader.

Like Gandhi and some of the other true leaders that this sub-continent has produced. Mujib refused to compromise with his principles and stoutly refused to bow to the authorities. There are hundreds of cases where freedom fighters refused to come out of jails on parole to see their dying relations. There are innumerable instances when young freedom fighters did not submit to the pressures of authorities to sign apologies and secure release and pardon. Mujib is one of those. On a number of occasions he resolutely opposed any such suggestion and refused to sign apologies for securing his release. In 1948 Mujib was still at the University and an apology could have stopped his rustication orders but he was made of different mettle. Mujib refused to do any such thing whereas some of the other students succumbed to pressure. Mujib had to forgo his studies—he was studying law—but he did not compromise with his principles and did not surrender. Such is the spirit of the man.

Gandhiji was secular to the core of his heart. His concept of religion was entirely different from the usual stuff. So is Mujib's. Gandhi was in Noakhali during the independence day celebration in India's cities. His outlook was completely secular though in no way irreligious.

Mujib also displayed the same principles of religious tolerance and anti-communalism. Some of his best friends were Hindus who worked closely with him during the years he assiduously built up Bengali nationalism again and put the sense of pride in the

Bengalis. Mujib was totally opposed to communalism and during the short time he was in government he saw to it that Hindus did not leave East Bengal for India because of religious persecution and fear.

The famous revolutionary of Bangla Desh, Trailokya-nath Chakravarty, 'Maharaj', said about Mujib four months before the Pakistan elections: 'Mujib is a progressive Muslim leader. He has worked hard for the safety of the minorities and I am confident that he will win the elections.

Sheikh Mujib himself has a religious bent of mind. Besides tolerating other religions, he always participated in religious ceremonies of others. One day as 'Maharaj' got up to say good-bye to Mujib, he inquired if Maharaj was in a hurry to go. He was planning to go to Kali Puja but Mujib was insistent: 'How could you alone go to Durga Ma and get the blessings? I will also participate in the celebrations'. He even gave a lecture on the significance of Durga.

Another incident throws more light on his secular character. One day Muslims threw bones etc. in a Hindu temple and tried to desecrate it. Feelings ran high among the Hindus who in a body went to Mujib. Mujib was furious and wrote to one of his prominent men to see that communalism does not mar the fair name of modern Bengal. He wrote to him: 'Mosque is where Muslims pray to Allah; Hindus do so in their temples. Both are sacred. Therefore if you desecrate one you are desecrating the other also. Please get the volunteers and put down the communalism and deal with provocateurs'.

Gandhiji had made it a point to have recitation from many religious books at his daily prayer meetings. Mujib did not hold prayer meetings like the Mahatma but his house could boast of religious books and epics of Hindus also. He has high regards for the Gita and is a

devotee of Swami Vivekananda, Netaji Subhas Bose and Rabindranath. He collected Tagore's works with great pains. He loved to read them and so he was able to develop his kindness for the whole human race.

That was one of the reasons that Hindus of East Bengal were staunch supporters of Mujib and worked for him ceaselessly.

Such a man is accused of organising mass killing of Muslims who were non-Bengalis ! Such a thing was just not possible; that is not in his nature.

Gandhiji's favourite, and of course one of the very effective, methods to rouse the public opinion was civil disobedience movement and Mujib adopted it absolutely. Such was the impact of his personality and influence that no sooner he gave a call for the movement, it was taken up by the entire East Bengal, to a man. In British India, Gandhiji did not achieve such a spectacular success, but Mujib's was a total triumph. He had adopted this method in the past also but for a limited purpose and not on a big scale as was done in March 1971. It was amazing and even the foreign press was astonished to see such a powerful and such a beloved leader of men. His call for complete *hartal* paralysed the whole administration. He was protesting against postponement of the Assembly session by Yahya Khan. Here again the movement reminded one of Mahatma Gandhi who also tried to paralyse the administration in the struggle for India's independence. The tactics were the same though the rulers differed. It was all the more tragic that Mujib had to put up this type of resistance against the rulers who were not alien in strict sense of the term. It was all the more disappointing that the very people who had worked hard for attainment of Pakistan were up in revolt against the same rulers who called themselves Pakistanis. So disappointed were the people of Bengal that they not only regretted their decision to

help achieve Pakistan but also adopted one of the poems of Tagore as their national song and later the national anthem which shows a people's repentance for the folly of putting the noose round their neck for nothing. They also took a vow never to commit the same mistake again, never to leave *Bangla Ma*. That was due to Mujib and his movement.

The Influence of Subhas

THE former Indian High Commissioner in Pakistan, Mr. C.C. Desai, M.P., has written that Mujib was influenced by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and was following directives similar to those that Netaji issued for his countrymen way back in 1933. What was done in 1933 under none too similar circumstances was repeated in 1971 when Mujib found no way out and the Pakistani military machine was bent upon doing what it pleased. He issued a set of directives that will do credit to any nationalist and in a way went much further than that issued by Subhas. Had Netaji been alive today Mujib would have been hailed by him. But why only hailed! Had Netaji been alive today perhaps history of India would have been different and the country would not have been sitting and trying to find a policy on Bangla Desh. But that's another story and could wait for some other place and time to get exposed.

In Mujib's early student days Subhas had not become Netaji but Mujib had come under the influence of Subhas and had been in close touch with Netaji's elder brother, Sarat Chandra Bose, after Subhas had sneaked through the British trap. Mujib had been closely following Subhas and had on several times met him in late thirties. What really inspired him and gave Mujib his lasting political insight was perhaps the famous thesis of Netaji on 'Anti-imperialist struggle and Samavad'. It was submitted in 1933 by Subhas to the third Indian Political Conference in London and has

become one of the most famous documents of the Indian struggle for independence.

Netaji's thesis was a little longer but the four most important points were firmly planted in the heart of Mujib when he became more active. These were the ones on which he based his non-cooperation movement and issued directives to his people after realising that Yahya Khan was hardly serious about handing over the administration to the majority party, nor had he the slightest idea of relinquishing power enjoyed by the army for such a long time. These four points were: Prevention of tax and revenue collection; measures to ensure that financial or military help from other quarters may not reach the government; winning over the present local officials of the government such as the civil servants, the police and the army, so that orders given by the government to crush the movement will not be carried out; and actual attempt to seize power by force of arms. Mujib had successfully adopted three of these before a massive crackdown by Yahya Khan's troops made it difficult and different. But even then the measure of success achieved by Mujib and his Awami League could go down in history as the most miraculous ever. He did not have to try to achieve power by force of arms for he had the massive mandate from his people but circumstances forced his men to pursue, with the use of arms, their goal of liberation of the country.

The surprising element of this was and still is that, while Subhas was waging a war against the enemies of the country's liberation, here was a man sacrificing everything and fighting against his own government, a government composed of his own brethren, the followers of his own religion and not a foreign imperialist regime.

Like Netaji, Mujib is free from communal considerations. In his earlier days Netaji was also deeply

devoted to Hindu religion and philosophy and so was Mujib—all out for deep religious bonds between the Muslims. He had campaigned for the Muslim Homeland but soon after partition he was disillusioned and became a truly secular leader, in preaching and in practice, Subhas Babu had a Muslim as his personal bodyguard, Col. Habibur Rahman, and in his Indian National Army both Hindu and Muslim blood was shed to achieve independence for India. The same thing happened in Bangla Desh. Before the carnage both the communities, and many others also, worked shoulder to shoulder to achieve a spectacular victory for Mujib and his Awami League and inflict a stunning defeat on stark naked communalist Muslim League.

Later, all the communities stood by Mujib when he declared his non-cooperation movement and oppression was let loose on the people irrespective of religion. Next round was resistance where the whole world saw both the communities at the receiving end of bullets and bayonets. In Mujib's philosophy religion was not a public affair to be mixed with politics. It was a strictly private affair and he maintained that all the communities could live in peace and prosperity together. This was the philosophy of Netaji and he brought about a change in the thinking of the people at a time when religion was still a binding force and religious hatred among the people of India was not uncommon.

Netaji's famous thesis was a long analysis of the causes of failures of the Indian National liberation movement till then. Netaji had given specific suggestions to step up the movement and he was for converting it from non-cooperation and civil disobedience to armed conflict. He had insisted on enlisting all sections of the people to ensure success of the movement. In struggles like that there was no scope for a sectarian or

parochial outlook and absolute success needed absolute involvement of all the people. Netaji had tried to achieve that and Mujib was fortunate in getting it.

It is said that Mujib had retained a copy of Netaji's famous thesis till the day he was arrested by the Yahya army-men.

On the four-point programme he had discussions with Netaji though he was still a fresh youngman, hardly twenty. What he lacked in years he amply had made up in his unbounding enthusiasm and fervour. These four points were firmly planted in Mujib's mind when he systematically escalated his struggle against the autocratic regime and hard-headed steps that the military rulers took. He had won over the entire civil population as well as the police, para-military and military personnel. That was the reason the entire strength of Police, East Pakistan Rifles and East Bengal Regiment of Pakistani army went all out to support Mujib and had thrown their lot with the liberation movement. Such a thing had never happened before in the history of any nation and the credit for that transformation goes to Mujib's judicious and far-sighted step to organise the entire people.

There is a controversy that Netaji, when he escaped from India, had given his blessings to Mujib to join the Muslim League. It may be true and may not be so. Netaji, if he had supported the idea to let Mujib join the League, must have done so not because he had succumbed to the communalist cure for the country but because he had seen writings on the wall and must have advised Mujib to do so in order to win over the masses who had been swayed by the League. Not to have done so would have resulted in isolation and Netaji was the last man to see a true nationalist and freedom lover young man isolate himself from the masses. Once the goal is achieved the masses could

be carried away by other nobler sentiments and those for national reconstruction, but probably the time was not appropriate for them to be aloof from the massive drift towards communal character of the Muslim League. Whatever be the case Mujib was not a communalist to the core and that was soon discovered in the first years of independent Pakistan.

Probably that was one of the reasons why Mujib accepted the idea of an independent Bengal, united Bengal and not as a part of Pakistan. He worked with Hassan Shaheed Suhrawardy and Sarat Chandra Bose, Netaji's elder brother. That was a last minute bid to do away with the idea of partition of the country, or in the alternative, to have united but separate Bengal where Hindus and Muslims could live in peace. But that plan was not to succeed.

Mujib, in spite of the campaign for Pakistan, remained essentially a non-communal, secular man. That was also the trait of the character of Subhas Bose. Soon after the Partition and resultant disillusionment Mujib started his other, and to intelligentsia more acceptable, campaign of keeping religion separate from politics. Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani and Mujib founded the Awami League. The first and the most significant task of the newly created League was to completely demolish the old Muslim League. Muslim League was given such a crushing blow that it has not been able to stand up till today. East Bengal had shown the way. Whenever ruling clique became more aggressive and vindictive, communal trouble erupted. Whenever Mujib was on top he saw to it that communal peace prevailed. That was why the exodus of Hindus from East Bengal was at times reduced to a trickle. It increased when pressure of Muslim League mounted.

This non-communal and anti-communal character of

Mujib could also be gauged by one incident related by an old colleague, Smritimoy Bandopadhyaya, who decided in the fifties to leave East Bengal for good. Mujib was not in government those days and so when Smritimoy went to him to say good-bye—as he could not see persecution of Hindus—tears rolled down Mujib's cheeks. Said he : 'Go if you want to. I cannot stop you because we have not acquired the strength to protect you, flesh of our flesh though you are. It is a shame for us and our greatest defeat also.'

Mujib paused to wipe a tear and then continued in a choked voice : 'The poison that you are trying to escape is there also. When you reach there try to banish it from the people's heart. We will do our bit here. And, tell them that though we have been wrenched apart, we on this side have not forgotten them. Geography may colour us in different hues, but history cannot bear our separation. We have learnt history and cannot forget it.' That showed his disillusionment.

Mujib gave to his people a slogan of *Joi Bangla* just as Netaji had given one to his countrymen. *Jai Hind* has echoed throughout South-East Asia and then India and is still the most popular slogan and salutation. Jawaharlal Nehru had adopted it and his successors have also stuck to this electrifying symbol of national struggle and national pride. So is *Joi Bangla*. It has stirred the 75 million people as nothing else did. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rehman had given his people something to live for, something to work for and something to look forward to.

Like Subhas Bose, Mujib too has captured the fancy of the young and is loved by his fellow Bengalis (all those who reside in Bengal, save the handful of puppets Gen. Yahya Khan has with great difficulty managed to muster). No other leader of a struggling mass has caught the fancy of his people as Mujib did and in

that he had only a couple of rivals in recent history of India. At one point of time even Gandhiji was eclipsed by Subhas and still the name Netaji has all the halo any leader could think of having round him but hardly anyone gets it. Netaji was such a leader and Mujib is such a one in the entire sub-continent.

Many leaders could be said to command more men in present-day India but that is precisely because they have power. Once they are out of power, not many people will utter even their name, but in case of Mujib the story is different. He commands the respect of an entire people even when he is just a political leader, not yet saddled with power. That is Mujib. His name has assumed a kind of charm, his personality has given the Bengalis a sense of pride in themselves and confidence to beat back any enemy. His popularity knows no bounds even when he is not among his people and is even rumoured to be dead.

Mujib's popularity has assumed unbelievable proportions. For a number of weeks after he was reported to have been arrested none could even think that their beloved leader could be arrested. Even India's Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, disbelieved the story and, contradicting the Speaker, said in the Lok Sabha that she did not believe the news of his arrest as it came from Radio Pakistan. It is just like Netaji's who is still considered to be alive and many people claim to have seen him here, there and everywhere during these so many years he is supposed to be dead. Mujib is in Pakistani jail is a reported story, but that has not diminished love and respect for him. At the moment it seems to be a remote possibility that he will ever be released and will perhaps never get a chance to form a government as long as Yahya and people like him exist, but the Bengalis are in no mood to accept any other replacement for him. When Swadhin Bangla Desh government

was formed in April, Mujib was declared its President and the Capital of the free government was named Mujibnagar. The free government has issued postage stamps bearing his picture. In fact Mujib has become a symbol of Bengali nationalism, resistance and freedom that has to be won in reality and to be preserved at all costs.

Such is the magic of Mujib. Such was the magic of Subhas who transformed traders into fearless warriors and had fought the mighty British with them. Mujib only promised sufferings and privation as was done by Netaji. Both promised freedom and demanded blood. Both got it. Netaji was not present when India became independent and Mujib was also not there when free government was proclaimed. But does that make any difference ?

5

Partition and Contribution

SIR MOHAMMAD IQBAL could be said to be one of the first defectors in Indian politics. And what a defector! It was he who sang and sang with gusto the praises of Hindostan. Iqbal's famous song still echoes throughout India and even the foreigners who present Indian songs invariably include it in their repertoire. It is the famous *Sare Jahan Se Achchha Hindostan Hamara*. But when the minds begin to wander asunder there is no end to it and Iqbal started to sing the praises of a Muslim state separate from India, a 'Hindu state.' Iqbal had sang about communal amity saying *Mazhab nahin sikhata apas men bair rakhna, Hindi hain hum watan hai Hindostan hamara*. But when the communal feelings ran high he became a convert and sang *Pakistan hamara*.

In any case the Muslim majority state that Iqbal and later Rehmat Ali envisaged did not include Bengal. Actually the upper class Muslims never took Bengal, a lowly placed Muslim area, with them. In fact in certain quarters the Muslims of Bengal were not even regarded as true Muslims, in any case they were not 'caste' Muslims fit enough to find a place in Pakistan. Years later when the Bengal leader A. K. Fazlul Huq and others found out that they commanded a wider following than the Muslim League of Jinnah did the idea of Bengal as a Muslim state emerged. But even then for a considerable time it was conceived as a separate Muslim state and not as a part of one Muslim state of Pakistan. It was only in 1940 at Lahore

session of the Muslim League that the idea of one Pakistan consisting of two parts came to surface and the credit, or the discredit whichever way you take it, goes to Rehmat Ali, a student from England.

This and the Huq influence in Bengal did have an impact on Mujib who was enamoured of the idea of a fellow student Rehmat and his *guru*, Fazlul Huq. It should be remembered that Pakistan as a separate state was not the result of genuine urges and aspirations of Muslims in India ; it was only a clever tactical move. This should be read together with Jinnah's absurd demand for a corridor through India, from West Punjab to East Bengal, which was rightly ridiculed by Congress leaders. Jinnah and his supporters knew the art of demanding too much and then bargaining for something less. That was also true in case of this demand for Pakistan, which at first was only a myth but later came to be seriously taken by Muslim leaders and Leaguers. Nor was Muslim League the undisputed party of the Muslims as the Congress was to a great extent, not withstanding Hindu Mahasabha, etc., which did not have comparable following.

With Fazlul Huq and his resolution at Lahore Muslim League session, it was now for the Bengalis to work seriously for a Muslim Bengal and a part of Pakistan. Huq was in charge of Bengal affairs as he was the sole and the most influential leader in the province as was Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan in the Punjab. Both were forced to accept the League as the national party because their's were only provincial parties and Jinnah was bent upon getting to the top as the undisputed spokesman for the Muslims of the entire country. As a result of the Government of India Act, 1935, power was decentralized to a considerable extent and that suited both the provincial premiers. Later when Jinnah started usurping all the powers for himself, these two

premiers were helpless and toed the line of Jinnah at the national level, as I have already pointed out.

This culminated in Huq's ouster from the Muslim League. It may sound strange fate for the one who was sort of father of the resolution for Pakistan at the Lahore session of Muslim League but stranger things have happened and are happening in politics.

Huq was a giant in Eastern Indian and Muslim politics whereas Muslim League had practically no following in Bengal. Fazlul Huq had revolted and taken the whole province with him but that he was not destined to continue was not apparent at that time.

In three years Jinnah had secured the Punjab and Bengal for Muslim League and though in later years Punjab still stuck to the League, Bengal was quick to throw it overboard. The revolutionary nature of Bengal and its leaders could not tolerate autocracy of others. They neither did Jinnah's nor Ayub's and in the present case Yahya Khan has also tasted the bitter experience of trying to crush the Bengali spirit.

In 1946 the Muslim League under the dynamic (from the League's point of view) leadership of H.S. Suhrawardy won a spectacular victory in Bengal as it prepared for the events of 1947 and India's independence and partition. It was essential for the League to do it as its claim to speak for the entire Muslim community of India was at stake. Suhrawardy had organised the elections, supervising everything ably and getting youthful supporters in Bengal. Pakistan was again the main plank to fight on and Suhrawardy saw to it that it is on every Muslim's lips.

It had worked and fired the Muslims who needed only a spark to inflame the whole scene. Bengal saw the worst of 'direct action day' and a bloodbath resulted in untold hardships to Hindus. Suhrawardy had played a significant role as he was the Chief Minister at the time.

It is stated that Gandhiji was very kind to Suhrawardy and adopted a policy to appease him, like he had done in case of Jinnah whom he himself used to address as Quid-e-Azam. This has been a failing of most Congress leaders. They have suffered from inferiority complex or alternately with extreme sense of politeness which the other side has taken for weakness. When serious riots broke out in Noakhali, Gandhiji had gone there and saw for himself that bitter anti-Hindu feelings have replaced sound logic and commonsense.

Mujib had seen all this and had a distant hand in it also. Not that he was anti-Hindu but things in Bengal were made miserable for the common Muslims and the Harijans by caste Hindus, landlords and the big industrialists that a fire-eating young man of Mujib's nature revolted against it. Indeed he was a campaigner for Pakistan, thinking it could be the dreamland for the Indian, specially for the Bengali Muslims. He is even said to have gone to Sylhet to persuade the Muslims there to vote for Pakistan in the referendum for the limited areas. Mujib was then not very mature and was sincerely following the steps of stalwarts like Suhrawardy. It will be evident from the following pages how much regard he had for Suhrawardy and the notion to see Bengal as a significant partner in the destiny of the Muslim dreamland.

How the dream was shattered much before it gave signs of coming true is a later day story.

Suhrawardy had probably done enough to feel morose and sad about the events of preceding six months. Or perhaps he had cleverly guessed that in future it will be extremely difficult to keep East Bengal with West Pakistan.

A little after the formation of Pakistan, Suhrawardy was still in Calcutta. It was said that he was afraid of the leadership in Pakistan—Jinnah and Liaquat Ali etc.

—and tried to have the best of a bad bargain. He and Sarat Chandra Bose, Netaji's elder brother, were busy formulating a plan for United and Independent Bengal, with both the parts of Bengal. I am sure, it was only prompted by the desire of these two leaders for not only keeping their original homeland united but also by their faith that they could take the whole of Bengal with them on separate status issue.

But well before that Mujib had become a staunch follower of Suhrawardy only to see himself in the forefront of Muslim student politics and was elected a Councillor of All India Muslim Students' Federation. That was the initial flush of fervour in favour of dreamland Pakistan—which was not to be. But over-enthusiastic Mujib had to learn many more lessons and the first came immediately after the formation of Pakistan.

Mujib's contribution for Pakistan was in a way not much. He was only an active Muslim student leader, and had personally campaigned for Pakistan. But his concept of Pakistan was entirely different from that of Jinnah, Liaquat Ali and others. His was the young man's enthusiasm, but as soon as he had it, things looked dismal and as soon as Pakistan was established Mujib, and people like him, were after something else which could satisfy their urges for a democratic and enlightened homeland. Pakistan, as it stood then, could never become their dreamland and Mujib soon realised it and embarked on a course which was full of hardships and sacrifices. Mujib braved everything and is still doing the same 24 years after he had his disillusionment and had turned back on whatever was achieved by a fanatic set of people.

The history of Pakistan was just starting with a set of disillusioned young men led by the indomitable Sheikh Mujibur Rehman.

6

The Seeds of Discontent

NO sooner did Pakistan celebrate its Independence Day than Mujib felt odd in that strange atmosphere. The air was heavy with intrigues and fascist methodology. It was suffocating. Mujib was a democrat and in Pakistan, specially in West Pakistan, such a thing never existed. Whenever someone tried to defy Jinnah or attempted to challenge his autocratic methods, he was politically strangled. That happened with Fazlul Huq and that happened with Suhrawardy in a way, for some time till after Jinnah's death.

Pakistan's birth had given rise to a movement which was democratic and not so communal. Muslim League had ceased to interest Mujib and soon after partition he started drifting away from it. Mujib was still a student. He had passed his B.A. and after the Partition had gone to Dacca from Calcutta and enrolled himself at the Law College. He had severed his ties with Muslim League and founded, with others, Democratic Youth League. Another association he founded was East Pakistan Muslim Students' League.

The significant moment came in 1948 and it was Jinnah who sowed the first seeds of discontent in East Pakistan, as it then was. Jinnah had gone to Dacca to deliver the convocation address at the University and Mujib was one of the law students present at the function. Jinnah made a forceful speech. He was a good speaker and a man who could sway people with his fine oratory. Mujib was one of the listeners and by

then had shed whatever regards he had for Jinnah and his status of the Governor-General.

Jinnah spoke about the national language for the new country of Pakistan. He himself knew very little Urdu. He was born out of a Muslim-Parsi wedlock and had learnt a bit of Urdu when he came to know that English alone will not help him in influencing the masses. A man of impeccable tastes, Jinnah was also a first class hypocrite. He knew full well that Urdu could not become the lingua franca of Pakistan. Not only it was not the language of Bengal, of the majority of Bengalis, but it was also not the language of Sind, Baluchistan and NWFP. Even in Punjab the language of the majority was Punjabi although Urdu was used as the language of the literate and the newspapers. Urdu had its home only in West Punjab, one of the parts of Pakistan, though the most dominating. So when Jinnah spoke at the convocation at Dacca University he was not echoing the sentiments of the vast majority of the Pakistanis but a handful of people of Punjab whose real mother-tongue was something other than Urdu.

Jinnah declared that Urdu, and Urdu alone, shall be the sole national language of Pakistan. There was a hush but only for a fraction of a second. It was broken by a daring student and his bold band of fire-eating friends. Mujib was quick to protest : 'No, no, we want Bengali. Bengali is our demand. We want Bengali as the state language of Pakistan.'

It was the beginning of the revolt. It was the first shot but that shot was not for personal gain and cheap popularity. It was not a mere slogan. It was the beginning of the deep disillusionment that Mujib and people in the same frame of mind felt. It was a sad commentary on the state of affairs in Pakistan and on the people responsible for it.

The story, in some way, is similar to the happenings in India but with two differences : First, in India there was no autocrat right from the beginning, and second, that in the statute book no such obnoxious provision was sought to be included. If any, there were the signs of liberal and democratic institutions to be established. In Pakistan the beginnings were for the preservation of autocracy and the trend after this recent climax, is for democracy. The demand is everywhere from Karachi to Quetta. But in India the trend is just the opposite. From the highest principles of democracy the leaders are fast taking the country to some kind of autocratic system where a supreme leader sits at the head of the table doling out offices or threats and steadily taking revenge for the past deeds, as the case may be.

Mujib saw to it that the autocratic tendencies are nipped in the bud and his protest at Dacca convocation was a manifestation of the same. Not that he had absolutely clear ideas about the shape of things to come but that he had ample faith in democracy and the freedom of the individual was very much evident.

Another incident which must have left a deep impression on Mujib was the one that happened in Pakistan National Assembly soon after the proclamation of independence. It concerned a lady member of the Assembly, Begum Ikramullah of 'From Purdah to Parliament' fame. She, a cousin of Suhrawardy, had unwittingly created a furore in the Assembly by merely supporting a suggestion that the sessions of Assembly be convened alternately in Karachi and Dacca. That there were many advantages in doing it was put before the house. Many nodded. That enraged the then Prime Minister Qaid-e-Millat Liaquat Ali Khan. As soon as the suggestion was made Liaquat Ali snapped back: 'You women do not understand practical difficulty and start demanding impossible things.' It was a little

too much for the begum to swallow and she retorted : 'If we had, we would not have got Pakistan today.'

The trouble with Pakistani leaders, the dominating West Pakistanis, continues that they are quite oblivious of the aspirations and feelings of the other sections of the people and the other provinces. Had the 'great' Jinnah given some thought to this practical aspect of the whole thing, perhaps the anti-India campaign would have been a little more successful in Bengal. But the haughtiness and superiority complex in the Westerners was beyond remedy and the results are apparent.

The disillusionment had begun well before the new Muslim state had set its foot firmly on the ground. Before it had a sound foothold on the ground it had given itself to airs, and consequently, the process of disintegration started before it was able to integrate the whole country to a reasonable degree.

Mujib was not happy with the whole thing because he had not bargained for it. But what could he do? He was disillusioned and disappointed. He was disgusted with the whole lot of politicians of West Pakistan in whom he saw no salvation and no succour for the Eastern region which had played a prominent part in the efforts to achieve the land of their dreams. But the dream was shattered.

As Pakistan emerged on the horizon on August 14, 1947, there was jubilation in Muslim regions but not so much in Bengal and politically conscious Bengali Muslim homes. It became evident right from the first days that political and administrative power, that is the real power, was surely gravitating towards West Pakistan. East Pakistan was looked down upon more or less as a colony and Bengalis as second class citizens. This was a terrible shock for the intellectuals of Bengal who had harboured great visions of a democratic set up and decisive role of East Bengal.

Islam could not act as the binding force right from the initial years of Pakistan and the seeds of discontent were sprouting so rapidly as to leave one completely amazed. All the important subjects, subjects which could restore confidence and create a sense of belonging in East Bengal, were no longer with the provincial administration. It slowly but surely was sought to be made an appendage of the ruling coterie of West Pakistani landowners.

Exploitation at every level and in every field had set in and this was the sure cause for resentment and discontent. Mujib saw all, and suffered all. His spirit did not tolerate all that and he was up in revolt and suffered imprisonment more than once for opening his mouth. He was merely asking for his share of the fruits of freedom ; not for himself but for the entire region and the entire people who went by the title of Bengalis. To him Bengalis did not mean a narrow ethnic group, howsoever big that group may be. For Mujib, Bengalis were the people who were living in Bengal, be they from Punjab, or Bihar or anywhere in the world.

Exploitation and resulting discontent grew and the two parts of Pakistan continued to drift apart further and further. East Bengal had bigger population and possessed bigger resources but even then it was condemned as a second class state. Most of the foreign aid went to West Pakistan ; representation in government service was a mere 15% for the Bengalis, and armed forces had only 10% Bengalis, a mere sprinkling of the total strength.

The seeds of discontent were sown deep and were sprouting at a very fast rate. An eye-opener was provided by the Industries Minister of East Bengal, Hamidul Huq Choudhury, who resigned in protest against step-motherly treatment to Bengal. His protest

was genuine and Mujib was fully in agreement with it. Choudhury revealed the following points in support of his charges : Central government refused to let East Bengal float loans to finance its development plans ; no new industry was allowed to be set up in East Bengal ; moreover, Central authorities took over industry from the provincial list ; sales tax was also taken over by the Centre and in spite of best efforts it could not be retained by the province ; Central government refused to give a share of income tax to East Bengal ; East Bengal was not allowed to have a commercial bank, instead the government opened a branch of the National Bank and money was freely allowed to be taken away to West Pakistan. It was mostly one-way traffic.

Certain things do pinch the people and hurt the sentiments of the common man. It was a fact that for ten long years the Chief Secretary of East Bengal was a non-Bengali and the Centre did not allow a Bengali to head the administrative set up. This is an aspect on which sentiments play a vital role and if it is done deliberately, as was the case here, it could invite revolt. And invite it did !

One may like to be fair to the man from other provinces also but if it's a solitary case of a particular province having a chief secretary who is an outsider, it will not matter much. But in case of Bengal there was only one top civil servant, only one ICS from Bengal, who opted for Pakistan. There was no Bengali in top position in West Pakistan—again one-way traffic—and that was the reason why the Bengalis felt the presence of a non-Bengali Chief Secretary as an irritant.

I remember my trip to Nagaland during 1969 elections when a Manipuri driver told me that he felt absolutely hurt when Manipur's Chief Minister was

given a back seat at a state function in Delhi whereas Nagaland Chief Minister got the front seat because he was the leader of a full state whereas Manipur was still a centrally administered area. How bitter the driver sounded is still fresh in my memory but I understood him perfectly.

Things are sensitive and feelings have to be assuaged but that happens in a democracy. In autocracy like Pakistan everything the West Pakistanis did was probably Allah's own desire and the Bengalis, their own kith and kin, were looked down upon as second class citizens.

Mujib was the last man to tolerate such a situation and soon he raised the banner of revolt. He was determined to adopt only the civil way, the democratic and internationally accepted constitutional way to protest. Pakistan did not have a proper constitution and whatever it had was not allowed to be implemented correctly to suit and satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the entire sections of the people in both the regions.

Mujib did not accept this situation. In a speech well before the present flare-up, he had said that East Pakistan got a very shabby treatment at the hands of Pakistani rulers. He resented referring Bengali Muslims as 'stooges of India,' 'Hindu agents,' etc. It was intolerable and the resulting resistance should not surprise anybody.

PART II

Active Politics and Alignment

Visit to India

In Ayub's Pakistan

'Agartala Conspiracy Case'

Active Politics and Alignments

THE dream shattered, Mujib was still struggling to find his place and for a time he was with the Muslim League but ultimately he left it in utter disgust. It was sounding of the death-knell for the League as a man of Mujib's organising ability and of course of the capacity of Suhrawardy were hard to find. The result was a new league was founded and named the Awami League.

I do not understand why the name League is so popular with the Pakistanis, including the Pakistani Bengalis. First, of course, was the Muslim *League* and later the National Awami *League* followed by the breakaway group called the Awami *League*. Now it is the Awami *League* of Mujib that is spearheading the resistance and has showed the way to all lovers of freedom and democracy.

The reason why Mujib and many others like him deserted the Muslim League is not far to seek. In the days immediately after the Partition, Muslim League became almost extinct in India but the Pakistan Muslim League, the successor to the Muslim League in India, became the ruling party in Pakistan automatically. There was no question of elections being held at the organisational levels and none could suggest that in the hour of League's greatest triumph. Jinnah had preferred to handle affairs of the state than those of the party. The result was neither could face the onslaught of the popular urges and changed atmosphere. If the League crumbled and became the refuge of office-seekers the government became the hotbed of intrigues, as is the fashion in

many Muslim and Arab countries. The fact that Pakistan has not been able to shake off the strings of the era gone by and dreaded is amply demonstrated in Bangla Desh where that very tendency was fully displayed. It is a medieval tendency and even worse. But that was the legacy of Jinnah who could have devoted himself to the organisation and had left the reigns of government to...to...well...I don't know.

The role Muslim League was playing in Pakistan was not of a really good democratic party who had won a homeland for the majority of Indian Muslims. India's ruling Congress party took quite a few years to degenerate, crumble and split but Pakistan Muslim League made a dash for the bottom. When self-seekers and power-hungry politicians dominate a party that could be the only result. The League leaders became arrogant and started misbehaving with the provincial leaders and other equally renowned persons. The shabby treatment given to Fazlul Huq by Jinnah was fresh in the memories of all, especially the politically mature and enlightened East Pakistanis. The League was disintegrating when its chief organiser Chaudhari Khaliquzzaman arbitrarily took steps to see his authority obeyed in East Pakistan areas also. That was not to be and the younger sections of the Muslim League were up in revolt. Chaudhari Khaliquzzaman had appointed Maulana Akram Khan as the East Pakistan Muslim League President. The Maulana was neither young and energetic nor was he popular. The result was that people like Mujib became thoroughly disgusted and broke away from the parent League. Thus was formed Awami Muslim League whose leader then was Maulana Abdul Hamid Bhashani. The Maulana was a man with democratic leanings. He was himself disappointed with the Muslim League. In the referendum held in the Sylhet district of Assam at the time of partition, the

Maulana, like Mujib, campaigned for merger with Pakistan. He organised the Muslim vote to see that an overwhelming majority of the Muslims sided with Pakistan. That was the Maulana's contribution and it was not a small contribution. But he, too, was ignored.

The reason why the League had to taste dust in the very first elections in East Pakistan was the tremendous vigour and vitality shown by Mujib and the Maulana in organising a rival organisation in defiance. It was an act of courage and it showed how hollow was the ground on which the Muslim League was standing.

East Pakistan was in the throes of anguish because of its inferior status and though Khwaja Nazimuddin was a Bengali he was in reality an Allgarh educated and west-oriented man who could neither realise feelings of the people nor could fathom the sea of disillusionment in East Pakistan. On the question of language he was no different from Quid-e-Azam Jinnah. The Khwaja also thought that Urdu should be the supreme language of the Pakistanis—both East and the West—little realising that a language has a sentimental attachment to the people who speak it, own it and are proud of it. This erroneous impression resulted in the serious situation brought about by the use of force.

February 20, 1952 and Dacca was in the thick of language controversy. A big demonstration was planned and to stop it section 144 Cr P.C. was promulgated. The order was defied which resulted in police firing killing as many as 26 students and others and injuring another four hundred. It was during Nurul Amin's ministry who had, till then, a sizable majority in the Assembly although he did not enjoy mass support. Amin was a protege of Nazimuddin who had become Prime Minister after the assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan. It was the same Nurul Amin who was till recently sought to be roped in to form a puppet government in Bangla

Desh by Yahya Khan. It was reported at one stage that even he refused to form a government under those circumstances. Presently, Amin is one of the two non-Awami League members elected for the National Assembly from East Bengal.

On that fateful day in 1952 twenty-six sentimental Bengali youngmen had died but they gave the movement for their language a mass support. In fact Bengali language was given a shock even by Nazimuddin who, as I have said before, was by education and culture not different from a West Pakistani. He himself was in favour of Urdu as the national language and had even blessed the efforts to have Persian script for Bengali. Later, one of the then League leaders had suggested Roman script for the language but that may be due to some consideration other than philological.

The West Pakistanis were, it seemed, bent upon having Urdu as the national language. The overwhelming majority, rather the whole area, in East Bengal was for Bengali. Numerically the Bengalis were in a majority, being 55% of the total population of Pakistan. But Pakistan has never been credited with doing something democratically and as the will of the majority of the population. When the central government tried to introduce Persian script for Bengali the climax was reached. The decision to impose Persian script was a mad decision, and rightly the students took upon themselves to mobilise public opinion against it in the countryside also. Groups of them went around villages and told the folks that their mother-tongue was in danger. Feelings were roused and it culminated in February demonstrations and firings.

The political situation and the disparity in services etc. were there to agitate the minds of the Bengalis; there were only a little over four per cent Bengalis in central services and West Pakistan was always enjoying

preference in all respects. And then the language controversy erupted making it very difficult for the rulers to control the situation. Anyway no one in West Pakistan really bothered to gauge the feelings of the people in East Bengal. The result was that demonstrations, firings and bitterness gave way to a permanent rift between the two wings. Whatever politics could not achieve was obtained by the language controversy. That day not Hindu but Muslim blood was shed for the defence of Bengali language as they knew that the language was 'their' language, it was neither Hindu nor Muslim language. Muslim blood had flowed there and it was true Muslim blood paving the way for bigger agitations and finally the break with homeland Pakistan.

East Bengal's capital, Dacca, had erected a monument to these martyrs but the recent upheaval saw the demolition of the monument. Said one of the nationalist Bangla Desh citizens to me: 'They may demolish every monument, house or other structure, but can they demolish our spirit and kill our feelings for our language? Who has ever been able to do that?'

This incident did one thing which none had even thought of; none could dream that the Muslim League government in East Bengal could take up the cause of Bengali. But circumstances forced it to do so. It was not and could not be that Bengali should be the national language of Pakistan but the next best was making Bengali as one of the state languages of Pakistan and making it the principal one in Bengal. The Central Government in Karachi had to surrender and take back its directive.

Mujib was at the centre of all that and as a youth leader had taken an active part in organising and mobilising public opinion and support for the causes. He did not blow his own trumpet, it is just not his habit. But the people knew the inspiring young man who was out

to give a proper image to their language in East Pakistan, a language that did not as a matter of fact need the certificate from the Urdu-knowing and Urdu-professing leaders of Pakistan of its richness and love for it in the whole of East Pakistan. The fact that a sizable population in India also is Bengali speaking does not alter the situation or make the language alien. After all Punjabi is the language of the people in Indian Punjab as well as the Pakistani Punjab. In any case the result of the Pakistani central leaders' attempt to force Urdu language down the throats of the Bengalis came to naught and over and above strengthened the forces of democracy and freedom. Elements other than those of the Muslim League started trying for something new, something more democratic and popular, because the provincial government of Nurul Amin was not capable of delivering the goods and had thoroughly antagonised the Bengalis by its initial stand. (Later on also Muslim League members did not open their mouths in the Parliament when the language issue came up to give equal status to Bengali.) These elements had grown in size and had become a force. The natural corollary was a trial of strength and the occasion did not take long to come.

Towards the end of 1952 the opposition parties had joined hands against the government to give a call for united action. Fazlul Huq wrote an open letter to Nazimuddin and was backed by all the democratic and progressive elements and students under the leadership of Mujib. In fact Mujib was a staunch follower of Huq and at his instance had organised the students for the specific purpose of mobilising and inspiring the youth for the next step. They had anticipated a spontaneous response and they were correct in their long term planning.

The letter to Nazimuddin was very clear and very

specific. Huq echoed the feelings of the whole Bengali population when he demanded early elections to the provincial assembly. The letter further gave the warning that if the elections were not forthcoming a nationwide agitation would be started.

The Muslim League ministry and the assembly complexion was as before the partition but Nurul Amin had cleverly produced a formula that suited his position most. The assembly was elected in 1946 but Amin got its reckoning from the first day it met after partition, *i.e.*, March 1948. Again, he got an extension by another year in 1953. These decisions were made by the assembly itself which probably had all the powers in the world in the absence of any constitution.

To cling to office the measures adopted by the League then were not very much different from those adopted by Yahya Khan now. The only difference probably is that then they were on a much smaller scale. Raids on offices, arrests, persecution of Hindus, etc., were there all the same. The result was that in 1949 and 1950 Hindus fled from East Bengal in large numbers. The exodus took such a big proportion that 1947 events were dwarfed. It continued until the agitation had taken a sentimental turn in favour of Bengali and Amin had to bow a little.

But then the letter had also been written and events in the country had taken a turn for the advantage of West. Nazimuddin was dismissed by the Governor-General and thus the League was also given a jolt. This must have been taken as a signal for a spurt in political activity in Bengal.

Mujib was with the East Pakistani Awami Muslim League and was one of the pillars of the organisation. He along with his senior friend Maulana Bhashani had embarked on a radical programme for the upliftment of the masses, long oppressed by the landowning aristocracy.

Mujib, as any young student was expected to be in those days even in exploited Bengal, was a radical and was there to give the programme of the party a more acceptable look for the common man in East Bengal.

The Awami Muslim League was transformed to a more secular party offering a more universal programme than the others. They had drawn up a 21-point programme with the United Front, the main challenger to the ruling Muslim League. This programme reflected the frustration of the people and the nationalism of the Bengalis. And that is why it found more acceptance than the reformed look of the Muslim League which also in a way tried to present itself to the electorate in a better shape. But degeneration had set in and it resulted in near complete rout of the Muslim League. The United Front limited the once formidable Muslim League to a mere 10 in a house of 309. Out of 237 Muslim seats the Front got 223. That the Front had such diverse figures as Fazlul Huq and Suhrawardy and also included elements from conservatives to communists was significant for it to annex so many seats. The Front programme included recognition of Bengali as the official language at par with Urdu; establishment of a directly-elected body in place of the Constituent Assembly; complete autonomy for East Pakistan in all matters except defence, foreign policy and currency; freedom to export jute; consultation between centre and East Pakistan for allocation of foreign exchange; abolition of Indo-Pakistan visa system and all the restrictions of trade between East Pakistan and West Bengal; devaluation of Pakistani rupee, etc. These demands, in a way, were the same as those put forward by Awami League's leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, which have come to be known as his famous six-point programme. The Awami League had all along wanted unrestrictive trade with India because

it was of immense benefit to East Pakistan though not so to West Pakistan.

This autonomy demand was nothing new and in a way the reaction of the Westerners was similar. They had come to regard themselves as slave drivers and East Pakistan as their colony. The victory of the United Front was made possible by the feelings of anti-status quo and of course it was a revolt against the dominating West.

Elections were held in March 1954 and in April Fazlul Huq, being the seniormost and the most respected leader of the Bengalis, formed a coalition government. It was short-lived as none of the ruling clique in West Pakistan was prepared to tolerate a government democratically elected and zealous about their freedom and autonomy. The central authorities began conspiring against the newly formed government and serious riots broke out in the area of government owned Karnaphuli Paper Mills in Chittagong hill tracks. There are more than one version of the incident, in which nearly 400 were reported to be killed and a thousand injured, but the most plausible one is that it was stage-managed to discredit and ultimately to do away with the provincial government of Huq. Huq and his colleagues were returning from urgent consultations in Karachi and before their arrival in Dacca the order of Governor-General dismissing the ministry and imposing Governor's rule had been promulgated.

Before that another drama was enacted. Huq had gone to Calcutta and is reported to have said he did not believe in partition. This was taken as treason on the part of one who was entrusted with the destinies of a bigger section of the Pakistanis. The rulers in Karachi could not possibly tolerate such 'impudence, such anti-national utterances.' He paid the price of his indiscretion, if he had really said that, but in Pakistan, as today..

there was no provision for proper clarification and defence. It was summary trial and sentence and Bengal again was thrown to bureaucratic and anti-Bengali elements.

If you are branded a traitor in Pakistan it is not sufficient if you are dismissed from office. Certain actions follow and in this case also did. Huq was placed under house arrest and attempts were made to rope in Suhrawardy also, but he was clever enough to sense that and went to Zurich for medical treatment.

Mujib had played an active part in all this drama, as active as could be possible for a firebrand young man who was still trying to find his correct and firm foothold in the political affairs of Pakistan. But Mujib was active in the election politics of 1954 and was himself elected to the provincial assembly.

Huq included Mujib also in his coalition ministry not because of any other consideration but only because of his immense organising ability and zeal. He was then on the right side of thirty and was full of vigour. It provided a break for him in the sense that all these years what he was trying to get for his people and the province was in a way in his grasp. There was an opportunity which he could gainfully utilise for the translation of his schemes and dreams for the well-being of the people.

But the time given to him and to his ministry was surprisingly so short that he hardly could get things in their proper perspective before central leaders struck and dismissed the ministry. Mujib was Minister for Agriculture and Development in the short-lived ministry and could not be expected to do miracles in two months. But Huq had recognised his tremendous energy and capability to do something solid for the people and make the popular government truly popular.

Mujib was again in as he was elected to the

Pakistan Constituent Assembly and later in 1956 joined Ataur Rehman ministry as Minister for Commerce and Industry, a post he held for about seven months.

Ministry was not Mujib's wholetime interest. There are leaders who are nothing if they are not ministers. The moment they are out of government they are reduced to zero. For them power is everything and without ministerial seat they feel like a fish out of water. But not so Mujib. He left his ministerial post to strengthen the Awami League which was more dear to him than the office as a minister. Mujib of 1956-57 was same as Mujib of 1971 when he was hailed as the future Prime Minister of Pakistan by none other than Yahya Khan. Mujib was not thrilled and I am sure even if he had taken over as the Prime Minister he would not have continued in the seat for long. He would have left it to someone else and devoted his energies to more constructive work to bring about a welfare state in Pakistan and to do away with disparities in the two wings of the country.

In the short span of seven months that he was in office as a minister, he set himself the task of breaking the hold of bureaucracy over the administration. He had understood that the 'Afsarshahi' was an obstacle to all progress on dynamic and pragmatic lines. He was not opposed to the 'babus' but 'babuism' was anathema to him. He was always an active minister and had never shown leniency when it came to state matters involving efficiency and speed. Once he had remarked that the government officials were not the masters of the people but their servants. They were paid out of the funds collected as taxes from the people.

Mujib had also adorned the chair of a central minister in Malik Feroz Khan Noon's government. That was a brief period of his somehow reconciling with the rulers of Pakistan as they were. He was only motivated

by one desire to see if his tactics could bring about a change in the thinking of the central leaders and the Muslim League. It did not work even on the question of sharing power with the representatives from East Bengal. Noon had Awami Leaguers also in his ministry but the sole purpose for that seemed to be to divide East Bengal's political functionaries and not to share power with them. According to this design Noon made a clever distribution of portfolios giving the unimportant ones to Awami League, a proposition totally unacceptable to Mujib on principles. He decided to quit rather than acquiesce in the favourite game of exploitation of East Bengal by West Pakistanis with the help of East Bengalis. Mujib refused to be a shareholder in that power politics and economic exploitation of Sonar Bangla Desh.

Mujib resigned in 1958 before Ayub had taken over as the dictator, a role he was to continue for ten long years. His life during these ten years was to be a bed of thorns. He had to suffer all the humiliation and indignities—always out of favour of the ruler—but he grew from strength to strength and became more respected and influential in the eyes of the people.

Mujib had all along tried to avoid being on the right side of the ruling coterie. For one thing he was not a yes-man of any one and, secondly, Mujib was more of an independent thinking progressive young man whose inclination could only be with the Huqs and Suhrawardys. Mujib did not feel himself at ease when the time for Suhrawardy had come to join hands with Muslim League leaders. Suhrawardy had been in turn a nationalist, a Muslim Leaguer and an Awami Leaguer before actually going over for expediency's sake to the side of unconstitutional Governor-General and the central leaguers. Mujib was not of that nature and certainly had the wisdom to see the politicking and.

refused to align himself as much as his leader Suhrawardy had done. He had at one point of time actually tried to dissuade his leader from doing this political jugglery. Mujib was not as ambitious as his leader was. Moreover he had more years before him to seek office in more favourable and democratic circumstances. In any case it was too much to expect from Mujib that he should have dissuaded Suhrawardy from taking the steps he had taken and foiled whatever chances he (Suhrawardy) had of getting on top even if for a short while.

8

Visit to India

MUJIB was of the view that between neighbours there should always be relations which are reasonable, if not excellent, but there should not remain major problems if they have to live in peace and make progress. It was more true in case of India and Pakistan who were born free with deep hatred for each other and in a way their whole thinking had been vitiated by distrust for each other. He had not told many people of his dream but from whatever I have been able to gather, from records and from his talks with intimate friends, etc., it was the desire of Mujib to have cordial relations with India and thereby create an atmosphere conducive for the growth of Pakistan, specially of East Pakistan. His argument was that history and geography were difficult to change and obliterate; once the hatred for each other was gone both could progress faster. Keeping good relations with India did not mean that the two countries should again be one and united—that eventuality may or may not come—but Mujib's point was that two could live amicably as two different countries but they should not have to spend crores and crores of rupees to fight each other. That East Bengal could prosper more by having cordial relations with India was a fact none could or should ignore but the suicidal policy of Pakistan was detrimental to East Bengal. As a matter of fact the whole thinking of Pakistan is based on hatred for India and whatever India does or proposes to do Pakistan takes it as essentially against it and so it must react in that particular inimical way.

In the light of the above and due to a very reasonable, practical and realistic approach to these problems, when Mujib and his Chief Minister Fazlul Huq took office after the elections of 1954 things looked a little rosy. They were given a definite welcome shape when Mujib visited India in early 1957 as a member of the first goodwill delegation from East Pakistan, or for that matter from Pakistan. It was really a goodwill mission as none ever came from Pakistan and had Mujib and like-minded Chief Minister not been in office in Dacca this visit would not have materialised. The visit left many 'happy memories, both in government and non-government circles, and an unfulfilled wish that a return visit could be paid in the near future. It also left a wish unfulfilled, to see people like Mujib at the helm of affairs to pave the way for a more fruitful co-operation between the two countries than the talk of a war, Kashmir, Farakka and the like.

Mujib came to India in January 1957 as a member of a high powered delegation from Pakistan. It had the Commerce and Industry Minister of Pakistan, Mansur, and included the East Pakistan Chief Minister Ataur Rehman Khan also among others. Mujib was then East Pakistan's Commerce Minister and was, as also many others, no stranger to India. He had been a student at Calcutta for a number of years and his visit to Delhi and Calcutta was considered by many Indians as home-coming for a lost friend.

Mujib was not given to emotions on the issue of mutual relations now that both the countries were separated by a political arrangement. But still, as I maintain, he was in favour of a better climate being created for the mutual progress and peace in the region free from tension. His deep feelings and the wish for a reasonable approach to Indo-Pak problems are highlighted by the fact that Mujib had two meetings

with Jawaharlal Nehru and one with the President Dr. Rajendra Prasad. They discussed everything freely and frankly and when they departed it could be said without fear of contradiction that better relations could certainly have developed if these leaders would have remained at the helm of affairs in Pakistan.

Vinod Gupta writes in his *Jai Bangla* that Mujib had brought with him a small bottle of best Bengal honey for the President of India as a token of goodwill and esteem in which he held Dr. Rajendra Prasad. The President greatly appreciated it, coming from someone in Pakistan, the country which, right from its birth, has been behaving in a deliberately inimical manner which gave the impression that even after the creation of the country separate Pakistan still had its designs on Indian territory and that it was not prepared to give that up.

Delhi visit gave an opportunity to both the parties to discuss many problems of mutual interests as flood control and the impediments to free flow of trade. Pakistan's fanatically anti-India stance had all along opposed any trade relaxation with India because they thought it would only benefit India. Whenever they were told that it would be in East Pakistan's interest their argument was that if that was so the people of East Pakistan would begin to have a soft corner for India. That was the last thing Pakistani government was prepared to accept because on its hate-India stance was based their entire existence. If tomorrow people of Pakistan start behaving as good friends and neighbours their feeling for a united India may emerge. Though it is foolish to think that by merely having good relations two parts of the same country could come together again. It requires something more than mere goodwill of the people to get the partition of any country annulled. It requires the sacrifice on the part of

rulers who alone will have to lose some seats of power after unification. By and large the people are going to benefit. But that is beside the point. During the visit to India of Mujib and company there were no talks whatsoever on these extraneous matters. They confined themselves, and rightly so, to trade, friendship and matters of mutual interest as two good neighbouring countries.

A moot point mentioned and stressed during the talks here was the safety and security of East Bengal which depended on the attitude of India. East Pakistan is surrounded on three sides by India and the fourth is also in a way controlled by India having bases on the sea; all the islands off the Indian coast in the Bay of Bengal belong to India and so in a way East Pakistan is at India's mercy. The fact that we have never raised a little finger against East Bengal has not been appreciated correctly by rulers in Pakistan but the fact remains that India holds the key to the future of East Pakistan. Mujib had realised that and he was keen to see that some kind of a permanent settlement is reached between the two countries making it possible for both of them to live in peace and progress. It was a wise decision and had Pakistani rulers accepted the extended hand of friendship of India, things would have been entirely different. Pakistan was asked by India several times, as a matter of fact all the successive Prime Ministers of India have proposed no-war pacts with Pakistan; but to no avail. Pakistan thought that once there is a no-war pact how on earth will it be able to restrain its people from wishing and working for eventual unification. It could be a heaven-sent opportunity. But surely the big and bad powers are not interested in any such thing. Divide and rule has given way to divide and quit, and the same thing was happening in India and Pakistan. The two parts of one

country have been left in a state of permanent enmity and strife thwarting the efforts of well-meaning persons and leaders to have peace and plenty for their people.

Mujib wanted to do his bit in easing tension as the first step towards the goal of good neighbourly relations and starting a new era of peace and prosperity for both the countries. It is a fact that had India and Pakistan been good friends, if not one united country, they would have been one of the strongest in the world. With numerous natural and manual resources the sub-continent could be a veritable paradise for the people and for the foreigners a force to take note of, a power to be reckoned with. But there are not many people like Mujib and therefore this dream of people like me remains unfulfilled.

Mujib had very frank and cordial discussions with Jawaharlal Nehru on all these aspects of future relations between the two countries and specially those between India and East Pakistan. Nehru was till then the undisputed and respected leader of India and no Chinese attack had taken place to shake Nehru and his utopian dream to pieces. He is reported to have told Mujib frankly that India would never, never, harbour any intentions against Pakistan and whatever Karachi thought about it, India would even be prepared to sit and discuss the future of Kashmir with it. India, Nehru told him, is stuck to Kashmir because of the principles of accession and propriety.

Prime Minister Nehru is reported to have disclosed to Mujib, first time to a foreigner, his readiness to discuss with Jinnah about the future of Kashmir when the Qaid-e-Azam was alive and even before Pakistan and India were locked on Kashmir. What Nehru told Mujib is a page of India's confidential history and throws light on the treacherous move of Jinnah,

cleverness of Sardar Patel and simplicity of Nehru. It is a confirmed story and had it happened, India's history would have been different.

It was given by Nehru himself to Mujib for the first time and which convinced Mujib of two things: the utter perfidy of Pakistan's rulers—past and present—and the sincerity of India's Prime Minister.

What Nehru told Mujib has been obtained by me in bits and pieces from different sources and corroborated by several others. It reveals the extent to which Jinnah and his advisors could stoop and it also reveals for the first time the wickedness of the Pakistani rulers to grab not only Kashmir but Nehru himself.

That happened towards the end of 1947 just before India, on urgent requests and accession by the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, sent its troops to save the valley and the state. As Pathan tribesmen, aided and abetted as well as organised by Pakistan Government invaded Kashmir, Indian Government was taken by surprise. Mountbatten was the Governor-General and he received a call from Jinnah to come to Lahore for talks on the future of Kashmir and on "how to stop the raiders", if India was interested in that. Mountbatten was agreeable to go, because of the sense of welfare and the good of India that he had dear to his heart. He asked Nehru about that and the Indian Prime Minister also agreed to go. Nehru was even prepared to accede to Jinnah's wish for a proper referendum conducted by the two Governor-Generals in Kashmir. But things did not look so easy and simple to Sardar Patel. Alan Campbell-Johnson has written about this communication from Jinnah to Mountbatten and his agreeing to go to Lahore with Nehru. But then as it happened only Mountbatten could go to Lahore for a three-and-half hour talk with Jinnah.

C-J gave in his 'Mission With Mountbatten' the fact

that Nehru did not go to Lahore to meet Jinnah because he fell ill and Mountbatten's certificate is also there to confirm Nehru's illness. But the fact was that Sardar Patel, the Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister, was also showed the communication from Jinnah and the fact that Nehru and Mountbatten had agreed to go. Sardar was opposed to any of the two leaders going at such a crucial juncture of history when anything could have happened to Nehru. He vehemently opposed the very idea of Indian leaders going but relented for Mountbatten to go and make an attempt to let Jinnah see reason. Nehru was in fact angry with Sardar but in matters like that Sardar had the last word. He even warned Nehru of serious consequences of his proposed visit to Lahore. Nehru was so much offended and unhappy at the attitude of Sardar, who sternly warned the Prime Minister in clear words, that Nehru took it to his heart and suffered on that account. He was shocked and his illness had so much to do with that memorable meeting Mountbatten and Sardar had with Nehru. The Prime Minister was indeed taken ill but not because of any other reason but only because Sardar Patel had in so many words virtually threatened Nehru against his going. C-J omits this episode.

Nehru did not go to Lahore and Jinnah's perfidy did not get a chance. Had Nehru gone to Lahore surely a fanatic Pathan would have succeeded in aiming a shot at Nehru or some other bearer would have been successful in administering some poison with his diet and that would have been the end of Nehru and an era. Jinnah would have fumed and fretted and apologised publicly for 'the great loss to the Indian people and the world' and would have even agreed to compensate it by some method but the damage would have been done. That was the trick of Jinnah and his advisers and only Sardar Patel was shrewed enough to sense

it and in spite of incurring the displeasure of the Prime Minister succeeded in preventing his visit to Lahore. Later, when some one asked Sardar how he was able to do that to the Prime Minister he replied : 'I am the Home Minister responsible for the security of VIPs. I had to do that.'

In any case Nehru gave Mujib the gist of the story of his sincerity towards Pakistan. He told Mujib he was even prepared to sign an agreement with Jinnah categorically declaring India's intentions not to take to arms against Pakistan over Kashmir.

It did show Nehru's sincerity but had it happened India would have been restrained in its attempts to save Kashmir. The same sort of self-denial that we had adopted for Goa in spite of the intransigence of Portugal for 14 long years. Nehru had publicly declared for the umpteenth time that India will not use force to settle this difference with Portugal on Goa. And when in 1961 India had to do just that, Nehru lost his face as a Savant of peace. That was an act of faith with Nehru which he could not keep. It was a silly and unnecessary posture. The present Prime Minister is doing the same, day in and day out, and saying that India will not take to arms for settling its disputes with Pakistan. That does not leave us with any option other than to negotiate and it acts as a non-deterrent to our enemies. May be because of postures like that India was compelled to sign a security treaty with the Soviet Union to mortgage its non-aligned policy. But that's another aspect and out of place in this chapter anyway.

That Patel's role saved Nehru and Kashmir is beyond doubt but the fact I wanted to stress was that Nehru and Mujib had very sincerely discussed the Indo-Pakistani problems and Nehru had given a bit of his mind to Mujib. He, could not foresee

that Mujib will one day be the undisputed leader of the majority in Pakistan and will need India's help to carry out the old dream, seen during his visit in 1957. It was for closer co-operation with India and an era of peace and progress for the entire sub-continent.

I am sure had Nehru been alive he would have definitely acted differently from his daughter and with better results.

9

In Ayub's Pakistan

AYUB KHAN came to Pakistani politics *via* the army and another military man Maj. Gen. Iskandar Mirza. He stayed at the helm of Pakistani affairs for a little more than a decade. During the 10 years of his rule Pakistan chalked a course for itself the results of which have been the carnage and the terrible holocaust in Bangla Desh. But there is another aspect of Ayub's regime which should not be underestimated: he made friends with the United States, China, the Soviet Union and all the Arab and Muslim countries, all in a way against India Pakistan's traditional enemy according to Pakistani leaders.

For democracy and the survival of lofty human values Ayub's regime was just the opposite. It was during his rule that 21 rich families of Pakistan cornered all the wealth in the country and monopolised everything among themselves. Ayub's family, naturally, was one of them and it is said that Ayub himself maintained large accounts in foreign banks in his and his sons' names. His methods of amassing wealth for himself suggested that he was not a true soldier but a clever member of the trading class so notorious in making money.

It is said that Ayub purchased arms from a Jew abroad on fantastic price, because 'India was threatening the very existence of Pakistan.' That was a convenient slogan and nobody demanded to know if the price he was paying and the quantities he was getting have a relation or not. The money thus shared went

to Ayub's Swiss and Belgian banks and the country was systematically robbed to keep up this bogey of Indian attack.

Most of that money belonged to East Bengal and when one day things become normal the Bengalis would demand a full account of this loot and the punishment for such crimes could only be death. But they may take a little time.

Gen. Ayub's coming to power had all the ingredients of a military coup but it has been claimed that it was a coup by consent. No doubt blood did not flow and the previous head of the state did not die at the hands of the coup leaders but in essence it was worse than that. A whole nation—of East Pakistan—was ignored and bypassed. The other part—West Pakistan—was gagged. Ayub became the Chief Martial Law Administrator in October 1958 and twenty days later, on 27 October, he had become the President without a prime minister to assist him. He had introduced the American system and himself proclaimed the beginning of a new era.

That the coup was bloodless but not really by consent could be borne out by the fact that under martial law Ayub had previously passed orders prohibiting so many things that did not leave much freedom for the agitators, political or otherwise. President Mirza had already paved the way for all that by declaring the 1956 constitution abrogated; central and provincial governments dismissed; national and provincial assemblies dissolved; and all political parties banned. The whole of Pakistan had to come under martial law, whatever that meant. For all practical purposes the whole country passed into the hands of Gen. Ayub Khan, the Supreme Commander of Pakistani Armed Forces.

Mujib was a disappointed man like many others.

East Bengal was full of politics and politicians and it was the intelligentsia of East Bengal that suffered and resented most. Mujib had to undergo prison terms almost half a dozen times in Ayub's regime and finally the infamous conspiracy case also was concocted to malign him in Ayub's reign itself. The man to uphold democracy and freedom was in anguish when the Pakistani publicity machinery propagated throughout the world that Ayub had come as a man who wanted to hand over the country to honest politicians and to usher in an era of real democracy. It was so ridiculous to see Pakistan missions abroad singing the praises of Ayub and hailing the change-over as working of a democratic process. No doubt there was no outcry from the people, no violent demonstrations and no protest rallies. But it will not be fair to sum up that there was no opposition to it at all and the whole country swallowed it without a murmur. As a matter of fact, the military regime had taken precautions to see that all political activity came to a standstill and no protest was heard. The voice of opposition was strangled by the establishment of military courts whose verdict was swift, unchallenged and as autocratic as Gen. Ayub wanted it to be.

That's why when Gen. Yahya Khan also announced that his aim was to hand over power to civilians, few believed him. His predecessor Gen. Ayub also had declared that 'my ultimate aim is to restore democracy'. But the military men had come to be the rulers and law-givers. Gen. Ayub slowly usurped all the powers and raised himself to be the Field Marshal, the first ever among the natives in the entire sub-continent.

In this set up dominated by the army there was no place for East Pakistan. How could there be when the percentage of Bengalis in the army was about eight only and that too at the mechanic and technician

level. There was just one Bengali in Pakistan army who years later rose to the rank of a Brigadier. So there was no question of Bengalis having any say in the regime that was imposed on the people of Pakistan by this 'bloodless' coup and 'coup by consent'. Complete misnomers !

Ayub was no doubt a clever man and right from the first moments of his taking over the Chief Martial Law Administrator's job he turned his attention towards East Pakistan. It was not for remedying the injustice done to Bengal all these years but to pinpoint the areas of potential trouble to him and take remedial measures. He went on a tour of East Pakistan and arrests of politicians followed. Security of Pakistan Act and East Pakistan Anti-Corruption Ordinance were enough to put behind bars politicians like Maulana Bhashani and Sheikh Mujibur Rehman.

It was only the beginning of a period of complete colonisation of East Bengal. Already in these eleven years of Pakistan East Bengal had been subjected to shabby treatment even in political matters, what to talk of economic and other fields. In this period three Bengali Prime Ministers, same number of Chief Ministers of East Bengal, a Bengali governor and a number of Bengali ministers were sacked. The number of arrested Bengalis would have been not less than five figures. Killings were common and none knew when the day would come for the Bengalis, though in majority, to have some semblance of justice and fairplay.

When Ayub assumed powers he had celebrated it with arrests of all the top leaders of East Bengal and even of several senior civil servants also. Ayub was till then only the Chief Martial Law Administrator and was yet to take over completely from Iskandar Mirza as the President.

East Bengal was in a sad state, more so because it could not boast of any top ranking military man and top civil servant who were fairly relied upon by Ayub himself. There was only one Bengali ICS member at the time of Partition and as I have already pointed out there was a very small percentage of Bengalis in the army and none at the top ten or twenty. The Bengalis were intellectuals and they were comparatively more in the political field, legislature and the judiciary. But in the regime of Ayub, political parties were not allowed to function, the legislatures were reduced to mere pawns in the hands of the powerful dictator and the judiciary liked by Ayub consisted wholly of military officers. The judiciary and its brilliant members had ceased to be a respectable community capable of interpreting the law and making the government act accordingly. Pakistan had passed into the hands of the dictator for the next ten years and East Bengal to a state from where only a revolution of the type going on now could lift it. But that came after 11 years and these years were the sad story of exploitation, political vendetta and annihilation of all the democratic and parliamentary values which in any case was never a strong forte of Pakistan rulers.

It is said without fear of contradiction that this coup was the attempt of Pakistani army and bureaucracy to avoid elections and prevent the coming to the power of politicians. It is also true that politicking in Pakistan had degenerated to a low level where no stability could be expected and may be none could be achieved while the politicians were in office. This was more so in West Pakistan than in East where politicking was of a little high order. In any case military dictatorship is no answer to the degeneration in politics. So when Gen. Ayub became the supreme boss and assumed the powers—defined and undefined—of a President

and appointed himself, after some time, the Field Marshal, all hopes for a revival of democracy and return to the era of parliamentary system were dashed to the ground.

This state of affairs pained Mujib immensely and he is reported to have said to his partymen that they would have to wage a long struggle against this sort of undemocratic rule and autocracy and that the road to democracy was a tortuous and hazardous one.

That Gen. Ayub was totally opposed to any democratic functioning of the parliament in his country was proved by one of his own remarks : 'Democracy cannot work in hot climate like ours. To have democracy we must have a cold climate like Britain's.'

What could be expected from the head of a state like this one who blamed the climate of his country for determining political values on democratic lines !

Ayub wanted all the popular leaders to shun politics and if they could give undertaking that they would not take part in politics any more they would not be proceeded against. Several top ranking leaders in East Bengal were already in jails without trial. But the movement for restoration of democracy and parliamentary system did not die in East Pakistan. Several associations and societies demanded early restoration of democracy and sent memoranda to Gen. Ayub. There were voices of dissension even among the members of the Constitution Commission set up by the President for framing an 'ideal' constitution for Pakistan. East Pakistan was actually the battle ground for the restoration of parliamentary rights against the President. West Pakistan was quite different and even the press there was toeing the official line of praising the dictator and criticising the politicians whom they all blamed for the political instability and economic ills of the country. They were all branded

as corrupt and demands were made for their open trial and severe punishment. The new constitution that Ayub brought about was hailed in West Pakistan as reflecting the true aspirations of the people ; it was a sullen silence and suppressed anger at the 'new scrap of paper' in East Pakistan. No eminent politician could openly comment and criticise it for fear of strong reprisals and newspapers refused to make any mention of the constitution. One of them said : 'if I cannot make adverse comments then better to refrain from publishing somebody else's favourable comments either.' Dictatorship had become so manifest that the authorities warned people that 'no comment' can also be included in propaganda against the new constitution. In other words, everyone was required to praise it even if he thoroughly disagreed with it.

Such was the state of affairs in East Bengal particularly, when Ayub strengthened his hold on the country and propagated his concept of democracy. Before the new constitution was promulgated in 1963 Suhrawardy was also arrested for acting, in a manner prejudicial to the security and safety of Pakistan. There was no denying the fact that the President was bent on asserting his authority and terrorising the others lest they at a later date decide to challenge his authority in any manner.

The President's advisors acting on his behalf took more stringent powers in their hands. They were acting in a manner which suggested they were more royal than the king. But Ayub liked such men and never questioned their over-enthusiasm and efficiency in silencing the opposition which had dwindled to almost nil for some time.

But this state of affairs did not continue for long. The arrest of leaders like Suhrawardy did not go unchallenged in East Bengal. Thousands of students

defied the martial law regulations to demonstrate and hold rallies. It was done in Dacca, Chittagong, Sylhet and it was repeated in Noakhali, Narayanganj, Barisal and Comilla. Soon it was all over Jessore, Kushtia, Munshiganj and other places. Pictures of Ayub Khan were burnt publicly and end of martial law regulations was demanded in the streets.

Nothing happened and the constitution was promulgated but that was not the end of the matter. The new cabinet and the new assembly elected on the basis of the new set up did not satisfy the aspirations of the people and even inside the cabinet there were dissenting voices. Pressed by the close ones the President was compelled to take steps to have some sort of a political set up. A qualifying clause was approved by the President that political figures disqualified earlier under EBDO would not be able to take part in the elections, the rest will be.

Everything that went on in Pakistan was really extraordinary. The President assumed full powers of a President even before the constitution had come in and even before the elections had taken place. Ayub enacted another drama in getting a vote of confidence which was in reality an exercise in finding out who behaves how. In 1959 (October 26) he had become a Field Marshal and the next day celebrated his coming to power by introducing his Basic Democracy concept for the 'benefit of common man'. This was a clever piece of ingenuity which even fooled the clever British. The Queen during her visit to Pakistan praised Ayub's Basic Democracy. It looked odd for the Queen of a country which gave the world excellent concept of democracy and parliamentary system of government to praise an autocratic method of befooling the people in the name of democracy.

In any case what Ayub wanted was being done and

was being praised by the controlled and loyal press in West Pakistan.

In 1960 Ayub sought and got a vote of confidence from the Basic Democrats, 80,000 of whom had been earlier elected, among whom were such so-called democrats as an ex-Inspector General of Police. Before Ayub had set up the Constitution Commission he had got himself installed as the first elected President of the Republic of Pakistan, a mockery of democracy and all canons of political behaviour. There could not be much opposition for obvious reasons ; on the contrary, the sychophant press in West Pakistan hailed all these decisions with astonishing sincerity. Commented one of the papers reflecting the general reaction of the people all over the country : 'February 17 (the day Ayub constituted the commission) will go as a red-letter day in the history of Pakistan; a great leader wielding absolute power chose voluntarily to subject himself to a confidence vote and without losing time he appointed a Constitution Commission with the directive to complete the work as soon as possible.'

It was almost impossible for anyone to comment on the fairness or ridiculous absurdity of all this exercise. But murmurs were heard from more than one quarter. The West Pakistani Press was absolutely following a one-track approach and without anyone to report the other side there was not much of critical comments coming from politicians, rather ex-politicians as Ayub had thrown all of them out of job. How free the press was in Pakistan is borne out by a story I was told while in United States on a foreign journalist assignment. The project invited journalists from all over the world including those from communist countries. In a previous group a from journalist senior Pakistan told the other fellow journalists about the freedom enjoyed by the press in Pakistan. He got up, uttered the

following words and sat down : 'Friends, there is a press in my country'. No more words were required to tell the world press about the plight of his country's press. These few words eloquently told the story of the total suppression of press freedom in Pakistan.

In circumstances such as these Mujib and his friends and elders were languishing in jails and the transformation from martial law to a regime based on the new constitution was not hailed as such in East Bengal. Students again, on the forefront of agitation, had demanded restoration of full democratic rights and a parliamentary government of the federal type.

Nothing happened till the elections in April 1962 to the National Assembly based on the new constitution took place. No political party could be in the arena but some of the old politicians standing as a-political candidates won on their own popularity thereby giving lie to the propaganda that all the politicians were thoroughly discredited persons in the eyes of the common people. They acted as a sort of opposition in Pakistan National Assembly. 44 per cent of those elected were members of the banned political parties or groups and many of them were against this constitution and the restrictions it imposed on legislative and judicial practices.

The new assembly took oath on June 8, 1962, ending the Martial Law regulations that ran for a little less than four years.

Ayub dropped 'Field Marshal' now and instead preferred to call himself the President. But could he really change his outlook of a soldier ? Can a leopard really change his spots ? That came out in the open once the President decided to head the Muslim League. It was a *volte-face* inasmuch as Ayub himself had banned all the political parties and had discredited all politicians as corrupt. Now political parties would be

made respectable because the President decided to lead one to give himself the satisfaction that he was also a political leader and not leading a military regime.

But once Ayub gave an indication that he too was considering the idea of joining a party, activities to revive this or that party under new banners started in right earnest. This naturally created apprehensions and Ayub came down with a heavy hand to arrest again dozens of politicians. Arrests and releases were the order of the day and no one knew where he would be the next day—in jail or outside to try and form a political party.

Ayub then decided to join the splinter group of the Muslim League called Convention Muslim League. It was regarded as the group of rank opportunists and hangers-on. On the opposition side, attempts made to have a united front of enlightened parties got a setback as Suhrawardy became very ill and had to leave the scene. He was rushed to Europe for treatment. This gave rise to differences and split in the ranks of opposition. Sheikh Mujibur Rehman then defied the leader and once Chief Minister of East Bengal, A. T. Rahman, and revived the Awami League.

Ayub had taken over as the President of All Pakistan Muslim League (Convention). The man had tried to give an impression that he had put away his soldier's cap and by doing so had become politicized. But the politics of Ayub did not mean that he was for restoration of democracy and all that goes with it. Ayub was for establishing democracy of his choice and his style and perpetuate his regime.

As 1963 came to a close Ayub Khan was firmly in the saddle as the political leader of the ruling party and the duly elected President even before that. Political stalwarts like Suhrawardy and the one time speaker of the National Assembly Tamizuddin Khan—

who had kept President Ghulam Mohammad on tenterhooks by challenging the order of dissolution of the assembly in the courts—had died. Ayub for the time being became the unchallenged director of Pakistan, a position he maintained completely in the West. In the East it was less of political grievances and more of economic ones that came to the fore and the politicians also thought 'discretion better part of valour' and devoted their energies to expose this disparity and seek redress.

But Mujib was not that indifferent to the political situation. He in the first half of 1964 again came up with the demand for autonomy which had political as well as economic bias. Mujib had in the meantime revived the Awami League and in a conference demanded full autonomy which provoked the President to call those politicians 'hired mules' (*bhare ke tattu*). Pat came the retort from Mohammad Ibrahim, one time central minister and ex-judge. He said, 'I prefer to be a 'hired mule in history' then join the ruling Muslim League.'

Confrontation had again started between the democratic forces and the militaryman turned civil politician. Mujib and Bhashani again were on the same platform demanding restoration of full adult franchise and the system of direct elections. President was in no mood to give this big concession and endanger his re-election in 1965. In the National Assembly bills were being passed to enable the President to get elected even before the new assembly elections took place. In addition, West Pakistanis got rejected a move to have Presidents from East and the West by rotation. It confirmed the misgivings of the members from East Bengal, one of whom summed up the feelings of all of them by saying : 'that the fact that you did not accept our amendment makes it quite clear that

you want to dominate East Pakistan with the help of persons from West Pakistan.' Political horse-trading continued in the assembly and members were being bought over and floor crossing were encouraged to suit the ruling party. Ayub had blamed corrupt politicians when he had banned the political parties but the same things on a worse scale were being repeated in Pakistan when Ayub himself was at the helm of affairs.

Ayub had buried all the norms of decent democratic behaviour and it was military dictatorship all over in the name of political party's rule. This was amply summed up by *Pakistan Observer* on the eighteenth anniversary of Pakistan's establishment. The paper wrote : 'Born as a democratic nation seventeen years ago, has it lost some of the inalienable fundamental rights without which democracy has no meaning?' Ayub maintained that he had given the country more democracy than there ever was.

This ruthless suppression resulted in Ayub's victory in the Presidential election in 1965 when he defeated the sister of Jinnah, Miss Fatima, who was put up as the combined opposition party candidate. It was a difficult election as the electorate consisted of basic democrats, persons who were not elected democratically in direct election based on adult and universal franchise. Secondly, Ayub was already in power, wielding tremendous influence and authority which he utilised to the maximum. In spite of these facts Miss Jinnah got comparatively more votes in East Pakistan as I have mentioned earlier.

Another gimmick of the President was that a notification was issued saying that the President had retired from the army with retrospective effect. In November 1964 the notification was issued saying that it dates back to February 16, 1960. This was.

another move to circumvent the regulations again made by Ayub himself.

In a nation of 100 million people only 80,000 basic democrats voted to choose their President. Then this small number was amenable to wholesale bribery and other threats. By systematically inducing and threatening the basic democrats Ayub was able to have a majority in the elections. It finished all that was left of elections and democracy and it was strange that a nation voted for continuance of virtual dictatorship, instead of a possible return to internal liberty and parliamentary democracy. But in Ayub's Pakistan anything could have happened!

10

‘Agartala Conspiracy Case’

MUJIB is a man who has been longest in Pakistani jails than any other political leader, except Ghaffar Khan. He has been hauled up on flimsy grounds and trumped up charges more often than may be customary for a military ruler to show his might to the defenceless people. But Pakistan is not a military rule in the ordinary sense of the term, it is the most extra-ordinary military rule that could be heard of in this twentieth century. Mujib, a man of dedicated faith in democratic traditions and love for freedom, could hardly see eye to eye with the most autocratic rulers that modern world has seen and the result was that he had to suffer so many imprisonments and even now is doing the same.

‘Agartala Conspiracy Case’ has assumed so much importance in Mujib’s life and that of the life of Pakistan itself that it requires a separate chapter. It is a shameful chapter in the history of Pakistan and a glorious phase of Mujib’s life when he came out unscathed even in Ayub’s Pakistan. It was a miracle, the fact of his being hauled up and subsequently being released unconditionally. He was made to suffer much. He was tortured physically and mentally yet the spirit of the dauntless man was not broken. He survived and was hailed again, won a spectacular victory and then became a hero and now a living martyr. But that is the life of a patriot even in today’s world ; that is the fate of a dedicated mass leader whose only fault is that he is not conform to the fake democracy promised by his military torturers and cannot bow to the autocratic

fancies of a ruling coterie of military-industrialist-landowning-bureaucratic clique.

He was already in detention when suddenly the people of Pakistan were startled by the announcement that Mujib and some others had conspired to overthrow the government of Pakistan and that they were aided and abetted by India. India will always figure in Pakistani rulers' schemes to malign their own people and whenever it suits them they bring India into the picture. For them any stick is good enough to beat India. And in Agartala case also India's name was dragged in. It was the closing year of Ayub's regime when on January 6, 1968 it was given out that there was a plot for secession of East Bengal from Pakistan and that 28 persons had been arrested. The name Mujib could not escape the Pakistani military clique. The fact to be noted in this connection is that Mujib was already in detention for the last one and a half years and possibly could not have taken part in any conspiracy even if he had wanted to. Pakistani jails are not like Indian jails where top leaders always get VIP treatment and the others also are treated at least in a much more humane manner than is sometimes expected.

In any case Mujib was implicated in that infamous case. It was perhaps masterminded by the self-styled President and Field Marshal Ayub Khan himself, to somehow postpone his ouster which looked inevitable. This was the worst slander on Mujib who had been one of the most dedicated leaders of Pakistan. He had played an active part in the campaign for the formation of Pakistan and had worked under Fazlul Huq who had the distinction of moving the Pakistan resolution at the Lahore session of Muslim League. When Huq and Mujib were fighting for a homeland for the Muslims, Ayub was fighting for the preservation of the foreign

hold on India, than the homeland of Muslims also. But that is the dirty game of politics and Pakistan's politics was dirtier than the dirtiest with no respect for rules, norms, constitutional propriety and so on. Even the very existence of Pakistan is devoid of any constitutional, historical or sociological base. But then that is another story and another aspect the mere mention of which throws even some of the top Indian leaders in jitters. You can talk of re-unification of Vietnams, Koreas, and Germanys but to even remotely say something about a re-united India is crime in the eyes of Indian rulers, what to say about the Pakistanis.

In any case Mujib and his Awami Leaguers were not talking about re-unification of India and Pakistan. They merely wanted a popular government, a democratic government and a square deal to East Bengal. That was termed anti-state plot and conspiracy to overthrow the government—even if illegitimate government—of the Islamic Republic of Ayub Khan.

So Mujib was hauled up and kept again in detention in a dungeon where even the sunlight could not enter. It was a 12×12 ft cell made worse because of foul smell and solitary confinement. It was the abode for a former minister of the provincial as well as central government and a staunch patriot but this was the fate of many of them. Mujib had to spend five months in this hell. He was not allowed newspapers or books. After a period of torture, both physical and mental, Mujib was charge-sheeted before a special tribunal.

The real reason behind this trumped-up trial was to malign Mujib who was emerging as the undisputed leader of the East Bengalis and was accepted even in many western areas as the answer to Ayub's undemocratic and autocratic rule. Ayub had laid a deep conspiracy to finish Mujib's political career for ever by charging him with high treason and sentencing him to

a long spell in jail if not to death. In his scheme of things Ayub had no other rival save Mujib and he feared that one day he (Ayub) may be ousted by sheer weight of growing public opinion and the person most likely to replace him was Mujib. At least he was the most formidable rival in East Bengal. Ayub had formulated plans to deal with East Bengali nationalism which had been a constant source of trouble for him and for his predecessors and possible successors—if he could have any say in choosing them.

Another factor responsible for Ayub's hatred and dislike could be his plan of vendetta on Mujib. It has to be remembered that in the Presidential elections of 1965 Ayub was opposed by the sister of Jinnah. Miss Fatima Jinnah was a respected lady though her chief qualification was that she was the sister of the founder and first Governor-General of Pakistan. The election was contested on the Ayubian system of basic democracy where she had no chance to win and the voting figures showed that in West Pakistan Ayub got 28,939 votes and Miss Jinnah 10,257. But in East Bengal the margin was not that big. To Ayub's 21,012 votes in East Bengal Miss Jinnah got 18,434. It was a narrow win in East Bengal. It was so, specially if one realises the tremendous advantage of civil and military resources at the command of the 'supreme' leader Field Marshal Ayub Khan. On the election day troops were standing by in the streets of all the important cities and towns not so much to prevent any untoward incident but more to intimidate the voters. And after all in an Islamic Republic where *purdah* is still so common a lady as President of Pakistan was unthinkable for the basic democrats the number of whom did not exceed 80,000. In any case it was a close thing for Ayub in East Bengal and though he had won he never forgave East Bengalis and their leader Sheikh Mujibur Rehman who was a

force to be reckoned with in Bengal politics and without whose active campaigning Fatima could not have mustered as many votes as she did.

So the Field Marshal had not forgotten all that and had waited for his opportunity which came by way of Agartala Conspiracy case.

in Mujib, Ayub had seen the tremendous rise of Bengali nationalism and the capacity to give a square deal to all the parts of Pakistan. It meant the end of an era of exploitation of East Bengal and the weaker sections in West Pakistan at the hands of rich land-owner-industrialist-bureaucratic-military junta presided over by Ayub himself and consisted of his son Gauhar Ayub, among others.

For Mujib it was the greatest trial of his chequered career and of course the most humiliating but he did not surrender. Mujib was prepared for the worst and he got ready for his defence.

Mujib's defence consisted of mainly his own statement which was as revealing as it was frank and effective. He boldly told the tribunal that he was falsely implicated in the trial 'just to torture, disgrace and defame me and my party and to suppress the legitimate demands of East Pakistan'.

The statement* was a sort of autobiographical piece in which Mujib gave an account of the services he had rendered and the fact that he had ceaselessly worked for the achievement of Pakistan neglecting his career and studies. It was, in a way, the history of Pakistan, more so of East Bengal and a brief account of how he was all the time harassed and hunted. He even told the tribunal—from whom the justice he could expect was not in doubt—that the Governor of East Pakistan Gen. Monem Khan had almost sworn that so long as

*See Appendix

he (Monem) was in East Pakistan Mujib would have to be in jail.

The trial was going on in Dacca and trouble was brewing all over the country specially in East Bengal to end the autocratic rule of Ayub. People were fed up with Ayub's frolicking with Christine Keelers and his sons rolling in billions. So much so that even the right-hand men of the Field Marshal were going to him and advising him to do something drastic in order to assuage the feelings of the people. It was said that on the day the case was withdrawn Ayub was acting under heavy pressure from the three service chiefs who were his own chosen men. A day earlier he was met by Army Chief Gen. Yahya Khan, Navy Chief Admiral Ahsan and Air Chief Asghar Khan to do something effective and something quick to satisfy the people who were half up in revolt. Ayub saw the force of their argument and gave way. The charges were as dramatically withdrawn as they were levelled and Mujib was released amidst mounting waves of discontent in the people all over Pakistan, specially East Bengal. Ayub's days were numbered and the shape of things to come was visible from a distance.

Mujib had suffered much during the two years he was in detention. His health had shattered but his determination had become more positive and firm. He was a picture of confidence and strong will when he came out of the jail and met his colleagues of the Awami League for a future course of action.

Later events have proved that Mujib was determined to take a decisive step for freeing his people from this exploitation, politically, socially and economically.

Ayub was biding his time and had suffered a serious ailment which might have been a heart attack. But do dictators like Ayub and Yahya Khan have hearts which could be attacked, anyway?

PART III

Ayub's Ouster

Yahya's Entry and Promises

Elections in Pakistan

The Long Wait

The Fateful Night

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Ayub's Ouster

AYUB KHAN had won a victory and for five years his seat as President was safe in Pakistan but the fact that he had to strain all his resources to defeat Miss Jinnah in East Bengal was a pointer to the shape of things to come. In East Bengal the combined opposition was not able to take everyone with it but the results were flattering for it. Miss Jinnah narrowed the gap considerably. The fact is that out of 40,000 basic democrats in East Bengal Ayub secured a lead of only 2,578 over Miss Jinnah. Fatima Jinnah suffered from all the handicaps one can suffer in Pakistan. The fact that she was Jinnah's sister did not carry much weight in a country where women are traditionally held behind the veil and a President in the flesh and blood of a woman is the last thing that the Muslims can think of. In these circumstances Miss Jinnah's losing narrowly in East Bengal was a pointer to the direction the wind was blowing.

The Times of London wrote after the elections : 'Confidence has always had its own appeal in a leader but President Ayub has learnt too few lessons from the election campaign'. These were significant words and Ayub did refuse to learn the lesson. He paid a price for that and his successor is paying very dearly for that.

After the Presidential elections it was left to the party of the President to suffer a defeat in provincial elections where Muslim League failed to get an absolute majority. It got 66 seats and the opposition got only 25.

58 seats went to independents, many of whom were won by methods well known in Pakistan and now in India also ; large-scale bribery and intimidation has always been employed in Pakistan since early days, even before Partition it was prevalent in Punjab. Defections were on a large scale and thus Muslim League secured an absolute majority in East Bengal. National Assembly had already quite sufficient number of Muslim League candidates and Ayub formed his cabinet giving the whole thing the cover of democratic election.

The elections were regarded as a show of Field Marshal Ayub ; it was autocracy confirmed by a farce of an election. West Pakistan took it lying down and as a matter of fact the controlled press there sang praises of the astute captaincy of Ayub assuring the people that all is well while Ayub is at the helm of affairs. But it was not so in East Bengal.

Bengal has always been in the thick of one political struggle or the other. It has stirred up agitations more than the combined number in any other state. As the *Economist* wrote : Bengalis belong to the most articulate, most politically conscious and most permanently disgruntled group in the sub-continent.'

Came the 22-day war with India in 1965 when West Pakistan was made to feel its patriotic duty to support Ayub and whatever he did, barring a few demonstrations where Tashkent was decried by many including Miss Jinnah. But while West Pakistan was crying hoarse over the results of the war and Taskent declaration which many thought benefited Pakistan the most, East Bengal was not enthused. Sheikh Mujib's reaction to all that was matter of fact and down to earth for East Pakistan was left undefended.

Bhutto had said about the 1965 war that India did not attack East Pakistan for fear of Chinese intervention. Mujib retorted that if Pakistan was so weak and

dependent on Chinese might and India's goodwill for the safety and protection of East Pakistan, what was the need for East Bengal to pay taxes and remain with the West ?

These were significant words and a lesson to Pakistan government but it seems the words fell on deaf ears. But sometime later when Mujib came out with his now world famous six-point programme it did rattle Ayub and his coterie of sycophants. The six-point programme left only defence and foreign affairs to the Federal government, and even there, foreign trade was generally sought to be kept with the provincial government.

Ayub was furious and burst out at a meeting in Rajshahi. He warnted the Bengalis in particular and all the freedom lovers in general that the six-point programme was nothing but an attempt to achieve a greater sovereign Bengal and it is 'the fulfilment of this horrid dream that will bring disaster for the country and turn East Pakistanis into slaves'.

What can be farther from truth ! East Bengal was already under the strong economic and political subjugation by the rich of the West and Ayub's stranglehold was sought to be loosened by the six-points. It was to make the Bengalis free and not to ensalve them. Mujib had sounded a note of warning when he even questioned the too much dependence on Pakistan for the protection of East Bengal. During the war with India East Bengal was open for an attack by India. Ayub and his military rule was only concerned for the West and had left East Bengal defenceless. It was only India's goodwill and restraint that saved East Bengal from being overrun. In a way this was resented by freedom-living Bengalis. They knew that India could never imperialist and they only wanted India to help them become free of Islamabad's yoke. It

was the reason why during the months of April and May when Indian troops did not enter East Bengal to free the land, slogans were seen on Dacca walls about India's betrayal. These slogans lamented the fact that in 1965 the then Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri did not take steps to free East Bengal and now it was Indira Gandhi who has betrayed them.

In 1966 when the six-point programme was launched it resulted in mass arrests and agitation. Mujib was the first to be dragged to the prison and hundreds of others followed. It soon took the shape of a mass movement and was joined by six opposition parties including National Awami Party of Maulana Bhashani National Democratic Front, Council Muslim League, Nizam-e-Islam and the Jamaat-e-Islam. They planned a unified command and started a campaign for direct election for the Presidency and restoration of parliamentary democracy.

There are people who do not see writings on the wall and Ayub Khan, though a shrewd man, also failed to see it. He went to East Pakistan and thundered against all those who sought autonomy for the region. Ayub had the cheek to remind the people of East Bengal that he was the person who had done immensely for Bengalis. He gave a warning to the opposition parties when he said : 'Those talking secession are not friends of the country nor are they friends of East Pakistan.' Ayub went on to say that the West Pakistanis have made many sacrifices for the East,' a statement that is absurd to the point of being ridiculous. Ayub gave a veiled threat saying that 'the people in West Pakistan were becoming more and more frustrated because in spite of their sacrifices East Pakistanis were not pleased. That is a dangerous feeling.' He went on to claim himself as the true friend of Muslims of Bengal. Here also he did not say friends of East Pakistanis because

he did not consider Hindus and others living in East Bengal as the citizens of Pakistan. This is a sad commentary on the role and behaviour of a head of state ignoring a sizable population altogether. Even then it was stupid of him to think people in East Pakistan (for him only Muslims) would heed his hollow advice and surrender before his threats. As D.N. Banerjee wrote in his book *East Pakistan*: 'He would indeed be naive optimist who could hope that such a claim would carry conviction in East Pakistan. But these words—imbalanced and intemperate—gave away the disturbed state of the President's mind in the light of the prevailing situation in East Pakistan'.

Ayub would not relent and East Bengalis wouldn't take it any more. The West Pakistanis may take anything lying down but the highly volatile and 'highly political animal', that is the Bengali, could not tolerate the denial of his freedom.

Ruthless suppression and imprisonment of Sheikh Mujib did not dampen the spirits of Bengal and the movement gathered momentum day by day. In 1967 Bhutto formed a separate party while out of office. He was thinking of the next elections due in 1970 and acted much in advance. His Pakistan People's Party did not demand autonomy but came somewhat near it by demanding restoration of democracy and adult franchise. He promised a brand of socialism which will conform to the conditions, traditions and culture of Pakistan, whatever that means.

The year was out amidst attempts by Ayub to please this and that and alternately giving threats but not doing the real thing—attempting to restore democracy at some level, to begin with. Ayub had other ideas and when he translated them into practice the whole world was shocked at his intrigues. The infamous Agartala Conspiracy Case was concocted and Mujib and several

others were named as culprits who wanted to overthrow the government of Pakistan. I have already discussed the case and connected matters, here I only want to quote what Mujib said about the case. The charge against Mujib and others was that they had been visiting the Indian town of Agartala where 'this conspiracy to overthrow the government was hatched.' To this charge, Mujib replied: "This is a wrong name given to the case. In fact it is 'Islamabad Conspiracy Case' as it is hatched there against the democratic people of East Pakistan".

In any case Ayub invented this method to discredit Mujib and his movement. His motive was also to convince the Army, his mainstay, that Bengalis could not be trusted in the Army. Besides, Ayub thought that by this method he could further split the people of the two regions—East and West.

Ayub had been struck by a serious illness, not disclosed but thought dangerous, but his trip for treatment and possible recovery did not alter his stand on the demand for a more democratic form of rule. He was continually administering warnings, threatening armed suppression by the army. At a number of meetings he warned his opponents that the movement for more than necessary democracy—the one granted by himself—would spell disaster and may result in civil war. Of course his threats had failed to cow down the Bengalis who were tired of these utterances. Ayub had threatened that big public demonstrations would never succeed in toppling his government and warned the opposition that a collapse of the political system established by him would definitely lead to a civil war.

This resulted in intensification of the movement and more repression. From Awami League and Mujibur Rehman it spread to all the students' associations in

East Pakistan and ultimately to West Pakistan. It did not remain the students' monopoly and soon was taken up by all sections of people from journalists, lawyers and traders to peasants, fishermen and teachers, and from doctors and civil servants to even prostitutes, as is commented by Tariq Ali, the left wing student leader of East Pakistan. With the intensity of the movement spreading to West Pakistan, Ayub began to worry. Bhutto, too, was his critic and leaders like Maulana Bhashani, Khan Wali Khan and others were also formidable in their own areas. Maulana Bhashani is one of the very prominent leaders of East Pakistan and respected by people in the West also. He roused the peasants as none else could have done till then and the movement spread to the countryside also.

Ayub and his advisers could only think of repression and more repression till the army came on the scene in a big way. Ayub was forced to close the 'Agartala Case' and Sheikh Mujib and others had to be released.

The armed forces had taken the initiative. The pressure was there for the President to talk to the responsible leaders of the people ; Ayub came to know that he could no longer depend on the automatic support of the army for his tactics. That did not mean that the armed forces of Pakistan were or are a democratic lot or that they had a more soft corner for the people in East Pakistan. It was because of the pressure from some of the high-ups in the armed forces who were not in a mood to risk a civil war which Ayub was talking about.

Before that the students, the more militant group in the movement, had resolved not to succumb to any threats, attempts at bribery and other methods adopted to divide them. Instead when Ayub continued to drive a wedge in them they protested and up went the slogan in West Pakistan that 'Ayub must go ; no compromise

with Ayub.' The people were furious and on Feb. 13, 1969 they marched to the Oxford University Press to ransack the whole place and burn down thousands of copies of Ayub's book *Friends, Not Masters*. Lahore and Karachi also saw unprecedented student demonstrations and their wrath and pent-up feelings.

East Bengal, too, was in ferment with Sheikh Mujib still in prison ; all this happened before his release.

The authorities were on a rampage and indiscriminate acts of violence were committed on unarmed people, from students to professors, to workers and the slum-dwellers none escaped their wrath.

Out of killings and ruthless suppression came the news that Ayub wanted to deal a final blow to the movement. He called in his three service chiefs and talked about imposition of Martial Law once again in the country, specially East Pakistan. The army could co-operate but on their own terms. Gone were the days when Ayub himself was the Armed Forces but it was no longer so and he was persuaded to abdicate in favour of Gen. Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army. He had come to the dead end in his career as the 'tough' President of Pakistan whose ten years were by no means insignificant for his family—three sons—and the like-minded people (21 other families who controlled the destiny of the millions of people of both the wings). Ayub had given political stability to the country in the sense that there was only one man at the helm of affairs for nearly eleven years. But he could not satisfy the urges and aspirations of the people nor could raise them to a respectable level of living.

It will not be out of place to mention a few of the 'achievements' of Ayub family during the ten years Ayub was at the helm.

Ayub's eldest son Capt. Gauhar Ayub was relieved

from the army to help his father in the 'onerous task of keeping the country together'. This was no official position. Gauhar's official position was a member of Parliament and in the process he was amassing huge chunks of money. He, it was said, had acquired three large industrial houses once belonging to the opposition leaders. The second son of Ayub, Shaukat, was said to be a director of thirty-two firms. He is the favourite son of the ex-Pakistani dictator. Ayub's third son, Tahir, bought a big company in England through a Pakistani and was meant to serve the dictator and his family in case anything goes wrong back home. Ayub himself acquired a farm in Sardinia (Italy) for 'rainy days.' Besides he has large bank balances in Swiss banks obtained by literally cheating the people. He paid huge amounts for the purchase of arms in world market ; an arms dealer, a Jew, was pressed into service and he sold arms to Pakistani government at double the usual price and put a sizable share in Ayub's name in Swiss banks, alleges Tariq Ali.

Then Ayub's daughter Nasim was married to a member of the Swat Royal family. It was a political as well as economic marriage and now the daughter's husband and his cousins grow opium in Swat to be smuggled to the Western world *via* Afghanistan. Surely a big source of income.

Ayub, while, he was the Dictator, held many things and people firmly under his control. One of these was the press in West Pakistan. *Dawn*, founded by Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah before partition in India, was the mouthpiece of Ayub. It is claimed that *Dawn* is an independent newspaper but who could forget that on the tenth anniversary of 'Ayubshahi' in October, 1968, *Dawn* brought out a special number on 'The Decade of Development' and Ayub's pictures were printed 69 times in one single issue.

But if sycophancy and unadulterated adulation could save any dictator, or for that matter anybody, the history of the world would have been different from what it is today. Ayub's case was no exception and he also went where others had gone before him. Ayub could only have the satisfaction of amassing huge wealth, making his life in London and elsewhere as gay as possible, and ruling the country for the longest period in its short history.

For East Pakistan Ayub was the tyrant and to keep as such him nothing was spared. Even the Yahya regime is a successor to what Ayub did and the extermination of the Bengalis is the brainwave of Ayub and his advisers. Ayub was at the helm for a sufficiently long time and he could have done something tangible and positive for the country. He plunged into wars with India, tried to suppress and consequently faced an upsurge in East Bengal seldom seen before in the freedom loving countries.

East Pakistan got more attention from him than from the others, who were there for short terms. But Ayub got more affront from East Bengal than the others. That was because he failed to appreciate the Bengali nationalism and aspirations. In the West and other areas bread alone matters but in Bengal people do not live by bread alone. There are more enlightened people and more education has brought about the awakening. Ayub could neither lull the nationalism and urges of the people to sleep nor could he persuade himself to do something concrete to fulfil them. The result was that he got colder reception in East Bengal than anywhere in the country. Who said the climate of East Bengal was not cold!

Tariq Ali wrote in his book *Pakistan, Military Rule or People's Power* that Ayub, when he went to Dacca in December 1968, told reporters that he was happy to

be in East Pakistan. 'The climate of Rawalpindi is so cold, but God has given such a wonderful climate to this province.' For Ayub, East Pakistan was to prove extremely cold, the God-given climate notwithstanding.

Ayub had subscribed to the theory that the East Pakistanis are 'permanently disgruntled', and that nobody could satisfy them. That they are the most articulate is beyond doubt but they are human beings and in need mental food and political exercise. It has been the tradition with the Bengalis to be on the forefront of political movements for emancipation of all types. Politically, they are the most conscious people, but it does not mean that they are permanently disgruntled or unsatisfiable. Since the days of Ayub capturing power East Pakistan's position did not change ; it remained at the bottom level. East Bengalis did not succeed in playing a significant role in the politics of Pakistan. They were not involved because they were kept out all the time and suspected. They were even not regarded as true Muslims and sincere Pakistanis. This increased their frustration, their anger and their disillusionment.

During the last years of his regime Ayub had made up his mind to crush the Bengalis once for all and he made his plans accordingly. He started the process, showed the way and himself began a programme, unwise and shortsighted, of systematically demobilising Bengali armed strength. He took the following steps :

1. The Bengali officers and other ranks in the army were to be gradually disarmed.
2. All the Bengali officers in key posts in the army, navy and the air force were to be replaced by Punjabis in as short a period as possible.
3. All the officers and men of East Bengal Regiment to be scattered to distant places.

4. All the Bengalis in the administration were also to be replaced by West Pakistanis.

That was the plan of Ayub and it surely laid the foundation of the massive manhunt his successor executed !

The fact that General Ayub had seized power *via* Martial Law and by discrediting the politicians was repeated at the time of his ouster also. It was an attempt to further discredit the politicians. The army had a hold over the chief executive and the administration. When General Yahya Khan took over as the Chief Martial Law Administrator, political observers saw in it the fact of history repeating itself. In a decade Pakistan travelled back to martial law completing the circle once again.

Yahya's Entry and Promises

A LITTLE over a month after the 'Islamabad Conspiracy Case' was withdrawn and Mujib released from the prison, Ayub had to step down because of tremendous pressure from all quarters. Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan, who claims to be a scion of some Persian warrior, took over where Ayub had left. In the first place, though he declared Martial Law throughout the country, side by side he promised early election and restoration of civilian rule in the country.

But before that let us see what Ayub had to say on the eve of his ouster. He said: 'I cannot preside over the liquidation of Pakistan. A strong centre was essential for the very existence of Pakistan. I cannot accept the demand of the opposition parties that the centre should be weak and that the country should be further sub-divided into two parts. This is contrary to the very existence of Pakistan'.

Ayub also had to admit that the country's economy had gone down considerably and was still going down (a fact he never conceded before, he had boasted that in his regime the country had progressed tremendously). 'The country is deteriorating and the economy shattered,' admitted Ayub, and so he found out the justification to hand over control to the army.

Ayub's words were significant inasmuch as he said that he had asked the army to take over the Centre 'in the service of the nation and for the existence of Pakistan.' A country whose existence is ensured by the grace of the army and where democracy and elected

representatives have no say in matters concerning the state, does not really live or survive; it just 'exists' and that was the state in which Ayub left Pakistan. It was made worse by his successor General Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan, the Commander-in-Chief of Pakistani Army.

The first thing that Mujib was faced with was a Martial Law Administrator who was as ruthless as Ayub but who wanted to present a facade of being democrat. Yahya Khan promised early return to civil rule. He even promised to have elections as early as possible. That Sheikh Mujib was offered the Prime Ministership of Pakistan is claimed by Awami League circles. They maintain that Yahya Khan was frantically trying to woo the Sheikh to substantially change his stand on the six-point programme for autonomy. Yahya had probably then judged the feelings of the people for the Sheikh and the tremendous influence he wielded in the whole of East Bengal as also in some areas of the West.

Yahya started by praising his predecessor Ayub and paid glowing tributes to his statesmanship and wise handling of the situation. But he also conceded that things had gone wrong and promised to put them right. Yahya reiterated his desire to hand over the government to civilians as soon as possible and to work in that direction. Yahya Khan made it clear that he considered sound, clean and honest administration as the pre-requisite for a sane and constructive political life and the smooth transfer of power to representatives of the people. He promised elections, free and fair and on the basis of adult franchise. Pakistan had seen only a couple of elections in the entire period of its history, that too once in the West and the second time in the East way back in 1954-56. Then also in East Bengal people came out victorious and the ruling party was defeated. But then Yahya promised that and there was apparently no reason to disbelieve him. In any case

disbelieving him did not take the parties any further so they decided to cooperate, excepting Maulana Bhashani.

But Yahya was a military man in true traditions of Pakistani 'strong man' Ayub and had no intention of loosening the grip of the armed forces over the life and people of the country. He came on the scene as the Chief Martial Law Administrator and, after more than two years in the saddle, has assumed the role in a fashion none had heard, seen or imagined before.

Yahya, much against the will of the people, specially of East Bengal and its most popular leader Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, embarked upon a high-handed policy of keeping the martial law intact, reviving old oppressive measures and even making them more stringent. He adopted various measures like whipping and death penalty to achieve his objective to keep the people 'in their places'. The apparent object was to 'clean' the civic life of corruption and pave the way for a free and fair election, have a constituent assembly and smooth change-over to civil administration.

The way he proceeded did not become very clear in the beginning. He did not ban political parties but in essence his step not to have any political activity in his regime was equally bad. Then the favourite pastime of Pakistani rulers had been to malign India and condemn some of the Pakistani parties by accusing them of collaboration with India. In Pakistan anything that cannot be refuted or contradicted by force of arguments and substantial proofs could be maligned by just accusing it of having connections with India. And thus were condemned Awami League, Sheikh Mujibur Rehman and Wali Khan of NWFP. But people by then had become wise and none paid much heed to the false charges and political propaganda of the worst type. Maulana Bhashani at first was not criticised because he was supposed to have best relations with

China. Bhashani had gone to Peking in Ayub days and he claimed to have brought about this friendship between Pakistan and China. Ayub strengthened relations with China and Yahya further cemented them when towards the end of 1970 he also paid a visit to China where he was warmly received and assured all help. So Maulana Bhashani was spared but all the other parties were made targets for attacks. His openly hostile attitude to several political parties gave the warning of his possible behaviour during the promised elections. Awami League was the special target and Yahya's 'own men' were also quick to see which way their master's inclinations went and they too started branding Mujib and the Awami League as not loyal to Pakistan and conspirators against the republic.

Yahya and his faithful supporters were also quick to rouse communal feelings even where none existed. In their design to create an Islamic bloc Yahya supported enthusiastically the holding of a summit meeting of Islamic and Arab countries. The pretext was of course Israel and the alleged desecration of Al Aqsa mosque. India was also sought to be maligned by the conference. If anything of serious communal nature happens in Pakistan it goes unnoticed by the authorities and the friends of Pakistan but whenever something goes wrong slightly in India, Pakistan is always quick to seize the opportunity to rouse communal passion against India and to malign it in every conceivable manner. It happened in Ahmedabad, and it happens elsewhere also. Not even the worst critics of the government can blame the central or state governments in India for any of the communal riots involving the minority community. India has always given the best possible treatment and facilities to Muslims and Christians and other minority communities even to the extent of inviting criticism of showing partiality towards them. The majority

community of Hindus has always a grouse against the government for not making uniform civil laws concerning Muslims and some other minorities but never have they been guilty of starting any communal riot. Several enquiry commissions' reports also confirmed the basic non-communal nature of the Hindus of India but Pakistan thinks any stick is good enough to try to beat India.

This policy of Pakistani rulers was designed to isolate India and make it a laughing stock in the eyes of the non-aligned world, specially the Arab countries for whom India has been showing more than necessary goodwill and sympathy. It has created bad blood between India and some of the Arab countries and Yahya was out to malign India even if in doing that he had to drive out hundreds of thousands of his own countrymen to seek shelter in India.

Pakistani rulers adopted just that policy and suggested a confederation of Islamic countries, more particularly of Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan. All that once again resulted in the exodus of Hindus from East Bengal in large numbers. Sheikh Mujib was a sad man. He had always tried to maintain communal harmony in East Bengal even at the cost of his life and even inviting the charge by the West Pakistanis that he is *Kafir*. It is on record that even Ayub, who knew well, had shamelessly branded Mujib as a traitor and a *Kafir*. The majority of the people in East Pakistan were not taken in by these gimmicks, but the agent-provocateurs were very active and the exodus of Hindus rose rapidly. However, it never rose to the present level. Even then Sheikh Mujib was unhappy and he came out openly to condemn it and blame it on the fanatics and reactionaries. Mujib told a largely attended public meeting that the Muslims had a duty to protect the minorities of East Bengal who were not foreigners but the citizens of that country.

In the political field activities were started for some sort of solution to the near stalemate. Yahya let it be known that he wanted a constitution for the country to be framed by the elected leaders of the people. He held a meeting with the leaders when Mujib and others held the view that population should be the basis of seats and representation in national and provincial assemblies. The majority of the politicians shared the view, there was no escaping from it if one wanted to give the impression of being an honest and progressive man. Also the political leaders favoured the break up of West Pakistan into the old provinces. This was not to the liking of the dictator who at first was only a martial law administrator but only a little later had become head of state, the President. Right from the day Jinnah died no Pakistani President had legally and constitutionally taken over as the President. Jinnah was the Governor-General and his appointment was authenticated by the King of England, under the rules which were never altered. Subsequently Nazimuddin, and later Ghulam Mohammad and others that followed, did not occupy the seat of the President strictly according to the legal provisions. No legal formalities have been done anytime and the usurping of power by Ayub, and later by Yahya Khan, was most extraordinary in any civilised country. But that had been their addition of many Muslim and Arab countries for Pakistan to follow. In any case Yahya Khan was determined to follow the short-sighted policy of his predecessors to play one party against the other. Yahya tried that but times had changed and everyone knew the game too well to fall a prey in his trap.

Mujib took up the case of democracy and elections and demanded to know if the President was serious about his promise of elections. I have been told by many Awami League leaders that Mujib was accused

by the ruling group of being very rigid in his approach but the facts were just the contrary. Of course he could not compromise his position and leave his demand for democracy and autonomy for the provinces. Yahya said there were obstacles in framing such a constitution and that it was essential to have a constitution for the country. Mujib agreed and went as far as to suggest a reference to the people for removing the hurdles in the way of constitution making about which the General spoke. Mujib was serious when he said that over 70 per cent of the people of Pakistan favoured three-point solution to the present ills of the country: first that one unit should be abandoned and West Pakistan should again be divided into old provinces; secondly, full representation should be given to the two wings on the basis of population; and, thirdly, full autonomy to the federating units within the framework of Pakistan.

These demands were fair and their importance lies in the fact that a majority of the people wanted it. It was the natural reaction of years of suppression and dictatorship. Civil liberties were nowhere in existence in the country and exploitation was rampant in every field. Pakistan had become a paradise for the rich, the bureaucrats and the armed forces. In these circumstances the demand for return to civil laws and democratic rule grew.

It was evident that Sheikh Mujib was in full control of the Eastern wing's political thinking and even many in West Pakistan supported him. Confident of his massive support Mujib threw a challenge to Yahya Khan to have a referendum for determining who wanted what. He said if his stand was not supported by at least two-thirds of the people of Pakistan he and his colleagues were prepared to quit politics the next day. Yahya's men on the other hand were busy confusing the whole thing. No one knew exactly what the General had on

his mind. No one could say with certainty whether it was going to be an Islamic Republic or a modified form of Basic Democracy of Ayub. Not even Yahya could say what exactly he was planning to do and which direction he wanted Pakistan to go to. Maybe there was a deep-rooted plot to remain in power but surely that could not be made public. He maintained the façade and promised early return to civilian rule.

Sheikh Mujib was clear in his thinking. No compromise on the six-points and no going back on the demand of autonomy. He was not prepared to give up his demand for the restoration of parliamentary democracy in Pakistan. For Mujib the demand of autonomy was not confined to East Bengal alone but also embraced all the other federating provinces of West Pakistan which were denied their basic existence as separate provinces when West Pakistan became one unit. Mujib was supported by some of the other West Pakistani leaders like Khan Wali Khan, etc., and in a way at first Bhutto also shared the views of granting autonomy to provinces though he was doing a balancing feat. Bhutto was sailing in two boats so to say as he is ambitious and had his eyes fixed on the seat of power in Islamabad also. But he openly supported the demand for a democratic constitution. He even warned the regime that if immediate steps were not taken for promulgation of a democratic constitution the country would lose faith in the intentions and promises of the military regime of Gen. Yahya Khan.

Everywhere the air was heavy and it was said publicly by many leaders that unless the regime did something tangible and quick the people might come out again in the streets to agitate as they did to oust Ayub Khan.

Gen. Yahya Khan and his 'hawks' in the army apparently had different ideas when they themselves engineered and then blew out of proportion the disturbances that took place in East Bengal. A small spark was made

into a big communal flare-up and even then West Pakistani newspapers made a mountain out of a molehill. It was reported that widespread riots were taking place in East Pakistan where hundreds of non-Bengalis were killed and thousands were injured. It was a calculated move to malign Bengalis and the leaders of democratic movement. Sheikh Mujib was unhappy at these tactics and came out vehemently denouncing them. He appealed and worked for the restoration of complete harmony so that no pretext should be given to the military regime to postpone a return to democratic and civilian government.

But the authorities were in a different mood. The hawkiest of the hawks, Lt. Gen. Tikka Khan, now in East Bengal, was the Governor of West Pakistan and behaved in a manner that suggested he was the true successor of Nadirshah and Yahya Khan. This had its reaction and as usual the students in East Bengal were more worked up. All the student unions had full support of Mujib when they launched a big drive against this repression. Mujib made it expressly clear that the agitation should remain peaceful and non-violent.

Mujib had at every opportunity reiterated his faith in non-violent method of agitation. He never let his followers take to ways that were fraught with grave danger either to themselves or to the community. That is why when Pakistani authorities blamed Mujib for the mass killings in Bangla Desh, one could only marvel at the shamelessness of the authors of this white lie and naked falsehood. Mujib is not a person to take to questionable methods; he is in a way still the follower of Gandhism and would like to remain peaceful even in the face of grave provocation.

Two of the top Pakistani officers in East Bengal were also a little more realistic and to a certain extent sympathetic to the demands of the people, who were their

own kith and kin. They were Vice-Admiral Ahsan and Air Marshal Asghar Khan. Asghar was one of the candidates against Ayub till a common candidate, Miss Fatima Jinnah, was put up against the President. Ahsan's name figures in the small group that is to be tried by the Yahya regime on the flimsy charges of being soft to East Bengalis. Ahsan may be court-martialled any day and shot dead. Such are the devilish designs of Pakistani military hawks headed by Tikka Khan, who surpasses even Yahya Khan.

All the events culminated in the famous broadcast of the President promising a constituent assembly and transfer of power to people's elected representatives that worked as a fillip to Mujib also for he was confident of his party's good showing at the fair and free polls. Secondly, he was more or less assured support of several leaders of West Pakistan also who favoured some sort of autonomy. They may not be with Mujib cent per cent but on principle even Bhutto was agreeable to much more provincial autonomy than was prevailing.

Mujib had commented on this favourable reaction to his six-point programme. He welcomed the stand of NWFP leader Khan Wali Khan, a son of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, and declared it to be of utmost importance to their case for democratic politics and government. Then Sind was also there in spite of Bhutto. Traditionally Sind had been very liberal and G.M. Syed and M.A. Khuhro have been senior leaders of the region. They hated the domination of the Punjabis and in the game of politics were for some time lagging behind Bhutto. They marvelled at Bhutto's tactics who first took sides with Ayub then claimed to be a champion of democracy and progress. It was a healthy sign for the Awami League and Mujib, as they prepared for the elections.

Yahya Khan's broadcast of October 28, 1969

promised a constituent assembly and a constitution within 120 days. He looked serious and sincere when he assured 'one man, one vote.' He was willing to consider the case of more autonomy to different regions of Pakistan and, as if to prove his point, restored the status quo—divided the one unit West Pakistan into former provinces of Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan and NWFP. This one-unit set up was highly unpopular and it was one of the demands put forward several times by opposition parties in Pakistan. Now at least a part of their demands was fulfilled. Parties and people began from here and started looking forward to the day of elections.

Yahya Khan seemed sincere, as I have commented earlier, and with his Legal Framework Order gave the green signal to political parties to plunge into the elections. He had reserved his right of interpretation of the election verdict. Yahya lifted the ban on political parties. While Maulana Bhashani was not enamoured of the prospects of elections and talked of raising a militia, another Maulana, Maulana Maudoodi of Jamaat-e-Islami, was for full autonomy for East Pakistan. This was supported by Bhashani also. But here the common points of the three ended and the Jamaat started a systematic campaign of vilification particularly against the Awami League leader. Maudoodi had underestimated the popularity of Mujib.

The President's offer to hold the elections for the constituent assembly was not a simple one. It was a clever move to forestall any strong movement and curb any grave uprising as a result of strict martial law regulations. Yahya Khan had reserved for himself the right to authenticate the constitution that the proposed assembly would frame. He could even dissolve the assembly before its work was finished. He did not leave room for doubt when he said that it was his duty

to see whether the constitution thus framed fitted into the framework he had announced. In any case it was made amply clear that the constitution would have to be acceptable to him before it could be put into force.

Awami League was the first to protest against some of the obnoxious provisions of the Legal Framework Order, such as overriding powers of the President to accept or reject the constitution, to make changes in the Order itself and the President's orders and amendments not being open for review by the courts. Mujib expressed his displeasure at curtailing the powers of the assembly. He himself took the matter with the Commander-in-Chief and the President Gen. Yahya. What transpired in the meetings none could tell for sure, but, the Awami League leader's statement that the party's six-point programme stays and that the Presidential assent to the constitution was a mere formality, as is the case in some of the other free democracies in the world, gave an indication of the outcome.

The Awami League was constantly working for ending exploitation of the East by West Pakistan. Besides their demand for restoration of parliamentary democracy in the country, more important was their desire to see East Bengal prosper and that the wealth of Bangla Desh was not continuously looted to fill the coffers of a score and odd rich families in West Pakistan.

The Awami League and its leader Sheikh Mujibur Rehman were keen to see that before any substantial progress is made on the political front a broad consensus is obtained on the principles for the future government of Pakistan. The constitution was supposed to be the repository of all the dreams and aspirations of the people. Mujib wanted a statute which fulfilled the aspirations of the people. He declared on a number of

occasions, at different places, that any future constitution for the country had to take into account all the disparity and had to assure the people their welfare and freedom from exploitation. He wanted the constitution to be so framed that would leave no provision for the flight of wealth from the East to West Pakistan.

Maulana Bhashani was even more outspoken but lacked the sobriety and dignified demeanour of his younger ex-colleague. But he was also in full sympathy with all that Mujib wanted and stood for, though he wanted much more radical socialism to be instantly established in the country. Mujib never threatened whereas the Maulana was always doling out threats to march on Lahore, organise guerilla activity and form militant bands to resort to agitations and he did not guarantee their non-violent character.

Sheikh Mujib was at times the target of attack by various sections of political parties and leadership. Though Maulana Bhashani never questioned the integrity of Mujib and not even once thought of denouncing him, there were others like Maudoodi, Qayyum and Bhutto whose favourite pastime was branding Mujib as American agent, Indian agent, dictator, anti-Pakistan and so on. Awami League was criticised vehemently for not showing more interest in the integrity of Pakistan but working as an 'Indian lobby' in East Pakistan.

Obscurantist Muslim leaders, some religious and others self-styled, attacked Mujib as un-Islamic and his socialistic ideas against the tenets of Islam. Mujib did not bow to them nor his Awami League wither away before this scathing criticism. Probably the reason was that they had worked hard among the common people and the enlightened people of East Bengal knew the distinction between socialism and Islamic socialism. It was apparent because many Muslim leaders themselves had said that Islam does not tolerate socialism.

socialism is against all teachings of Islam and no true Muslim could ever think of becoming a socialist. Mujib was called *Kafir* and atheist but he knew what he was and his people knew what he meant for them. And thus Awami League grew from strength to strength.

When cyclone hit East Bengal it was Mujib and his Awami League volunteers who toured the affected areas and rendered as much assistance as they could muster with their limited resources. It was lip sympathy from Yahya Khan down to the lowest West Pakistani civil servant and from Bhutto to lesser known West Pakistani politicians. Out of the West Pakistani politicians only Wali Khan visited East Bengal during the troubled days. It was reported that the authorities of Pakistan diverted all the relief supplies to West Pakistan. Relief boats and helicopters sent by foreign countries for the specific purpose of relief were employed for ferrying troops later. Shipment of supplies was not allowed to be sent to East Bengal directly by donor countries and all that was unloaded in Karachi. India's generous offer of large-scale assistance was not utilised by Pakistani authorities on one pretext or the other; that story is too well known to bear repetition. All this was happening in East Bengal while callous West Pakistani authorities and politicians were busy manoeuvring for political gains. Jamna Das Akhtar quotes an incident when a West Pakistani captain of a Pakistani ship refused to pick up survivors of the cyclone helplessly floating in the high seas 60 miles off the coast. Such callousness could only be matched by the total disregard of cyclone warning issued by the American weather satellite. The Pakistani authorities were warned as early as November 6 about the impending cyclone and the warnings were repeated every day till the 12th. Nothing was done and the next day storms broke out. Hundreds of thousands of lives were

lost and property damage was to the tune of Rs. 500 crores. When later this warning episode was brought to the notice of Gen. Yahya Khan he replied with impunity : 'What could we have done even if the warning was received a week in advance ; could we have stopped the cyclone ?' Such a statement does not befit the head of a state but this utter callousness does not bother Yahya Khan who comes of a stock of barbarous chieftains of medieval times. It is common knowledge that the issuance of the cyclone warning at proper time would have saved numerous lives ; people and goods could have been evacuated to safer areas and relief operations organised much in advance. Nothing of that sort was done. Whatever was done resulted only in culminating the sufferings of the people of East Bengal.

Here I would like to quote what *Pakistan Observer*, a progressive, impartial and influential newspaper of Dacca, wrote about the whole thing and the attitude of Pakistani authorities : 'Sheikh Mujib has highlighted the total callousness and apathy of Pakistani rulers in the situation faced by East Pakistan today. Their whole attitude towards Bengalis is nothing but deplorable. At a time when generous assistance was being sent by foreign countries it took the rulers of Pakistan eight days to decide to organise some relief and another two days to decide to sanction five crores of rupees for relief. Mujib has rightly asked the authorities and alerted his people that 60 per cent of our budget goes to Defence Services and Bengalis have sacrificed to make the West Pakistani businessmen more prosperous. This will only strengthen Awami League's demand for regional autonomy and their six-point programme for attaining it.' Yahya toured affected areas while dead drunk.

Sheikh Mujib and his colleagues forgot about politics

and the preparation for the elections and engaged themselves in relief work. Mujib himself toured the countryside extensively and organised relief.

Cyclone damage takes months and years to repair and the elections once postponed from October to December were again sought to be postponed. The simple reason was that the popularity of the Awami League had considerably gone up during the cyclone relief days. The others behaved like Nero who played the flute while Rome was burning. Many opposition parties which were opposed to the Awami League openly canvassed for the postponement of the elections. Many had the foresight to realise that Mujib would sweep the polls if the elections were held in that atmosphere. But Yahya's intelligence was not correct when it advised the President that there was no fear of Awamis emerging as the majority party. In any case they could be the single largest party and in that event alliances could be forged and fronts formed to thwart the intentions of the Awami League to go ahead with their programme of autonomy as envisaged in their six-point programme.

Mujib had till then not the slightest inclination to secede from Pakistan but he did warn the central government that so far East Bengal had taken all this maltreatment lying down. He said that any further delay in the elections and denying the people the opportunity to rule themselves would result in a serious situation where people could start asking to live as free Bengalis. That was taken to be his demand and warning that he was even prepared to have a unilateral declaration of Independence. It did not come, for, Mujib had no such intentions. In New Delhi recently, Mizanur Rehman, the acting General Secretary of the Awami League, told me categorically that at no point of time did Mujibur Rehman say he would secede or that he had declared Independence. It was after the

military crackdown and Sheikh Mujib's absence that the Bengalis had no other alternative but to wage a war of liberation. It is a lie to brand Mujib as secessionist and traitor.

Mujib was undeterred by all such talk of armchair politicians and people with no ideology, no record of selfless service and no sound backing. He was, of course, not prepared to enter into any alliance with anybody, least of all with Bhutto who had on several occasions denounced Mujib and his policies. Mujib was agreeable to discuss political co-operation once the elections were over but alliances was the last thing he would talk about.

When Yahya returned from China with assurances of all help and after seeing the military and proletariat might of the "great socialist country" he visited East Bengal. His visit had two-fold purpose: one that the people should be grateful to him for securing the assistance of China for the noble cause of defending Pakistan's frontiers and for the tremendous task of development, secondly to assess the political situation in the region and the chances of his remaining the decisive factor after the elections. In order to show his own magnanimity and kindness to the people Yahya Khan declared that he was not averse to the demand of autonomy but it should be in the framework of Pakistan. He said he wanted to give as much autonomy and self-rule to East Pakistan as possible, particularly when it is situated hundreds of miles from the other wing and the seat of government. In any case he wanted Pakistan to remain a united and strong country with a powerful government at the centre.

The President of Pakistan never spared India and any stick was good enough to try to beat India with. The elections in Pakistan had nothing to do with India nor was India interested in the victory of this or that party.

At his weekly briefings, Shailendra Kumar Singh, the spokesman of the External Affairs Ministry of the Government of India, said categorically that the only thing India was interested in was that elections might result in a more rational and right thinking government in Pakistan ; and that India would welcome democracy and popular government in Pakistan.

Being a democracy herself, the Indians were naturally interested in seeing democracy established in Pakistan after so many years. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Foreign Minister Swaran Singh also spoke the same way and only expressed their 'non-aligned and non-involved' wish to have a popular government in Pakistan. Beyond that none would make any comment for Pakistanis might give it a twist to their advantage and malign their own parties and people. It was convenient to charge any one as Indian agent or stooge. Any opposition party could be branded Indian lobby. Even the President of Pakistan did not spare India and blamed it for Kashmir, for Farakka and for a hundred other imaginary things. One is astonished at the depth the rulers of Pakistan could stoop to get cheap popularity and even that was doubtful. In any case when the President of Pakistan, General Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan, announced that elections would be held as scheduled—after one postponement—all the energies were diverted to the polls and Awami League prepared to take up the challenge for democracy and for autonomy. Mujib had made it amply clear that their stand about autonomy was before the people and their verdict would decide which way the people wanted to go.

Kashmir and Farakka were slogans and handy tools for the Pakistani rulers and their henchmen but Sheikh Mujibur Rehman was bold enough to put the things in their proper perspective. He made it amply clear that Kashmir could be taken care of by UN Security Council

resolutions and if there is any threat to East Bengal because of Farakka that could be met by taking effective and corrective steps. This statement did not show any friendly feelings for India nor it said that Pakistan was at fault. This was a statement of a mature leader who wanted to see his country prosper and who was not in the habit of distorting facts and twisting truth to gain cheap popularity.

Sheikh's forthright stand was convincing enough for his people. Leaders like Maulana Bhashani had different ideas about the elections. The Maulana and Ataur Rehman had no faith in them and they decided to boycott the elections. The Maulana even called upon Mujib to shun those elections and work for freedom. Mujib had no such intentions; instead he waited for the elections.

13

Elections in Pakistan

SHEIKH MUJIBUR REHMAN believed in constitutional struggle to get the rights of the people restored to them. His Awami League did not take to extra-constitutional methods and took the elections seriously. It was for the first time that elections were being held in both the wings simultaneously and on the basis of adult franchise. I would like to give the devil his due—Gen. Yahya Khan could be given credit for ordering the elections. It does not matter if he was compelled and had no alternative but to bow to the will and pressure of the people. Another reason was that he had miscalculated the influence of the Awami League and Mujib.

In any case when the elections came Yahya was probably confident that no party would get a majority and no front could muster enough support to have a working majority in the constituent assembly. The Assembly thus would be unable to produce an agreed constitution and Gen. Yahya Khan could throw up his hands in mock despair and say that he was prepared to transfer power to the civilians but he was helpless in the circumstances. Then he could consolidate his position further, if at a later date he had to order fresh elections. He was in a way lulled into this sort of kite-flying and day-dreaming by his advisers and intelligence men who were more eager to please the master than to give him the correct assessment. Maybe, they themselves were living under the illusion that all was well in Pakistan, specially East Pakistan, and people would not

be 'misled' by a 'handful of misguided youngmen'. This line was sold to several groups of journalists who had met the President earlier.

The election campaign was hectic and full of life. Though there were several attempts to disturb public meetings and campaigns of the Awami League, it was impossible to make a dent on it.

Sheikh Mujib was himself the chief organiser of his party's election campaign. His home was his office. The middle class Dhanmudi residence of Mujib, a two-storey house, was the election headquarters of Awami League. Mujib's bedroom was converted into a working room where at all times one could see a dozen workers and other people gathered. His bed was his office-chair. I have not seen many leaders working like that. Mujib's working was different. None knew when he would go to bed for a nap. He could be discussing a particular area when at the next moment an old colleague would drop in for one of his small problems. Mujib would attentively listen to what he had to say even if it was not connected with elections and electioneering.

Mujib's is a towering personality. He is taller than the average Bengali and his voice is heavy. With his greying hair thrown back, dark rimmed glasses and the pipe in his left hand he looked an impressive personality. He will not whisper softly but talk in a commanding voice.

Mujib took the elections as a matter of utmost importance for the future of East Pakistan, for democracy and for Pakistan itself. It was the question of ushering in democracy in the land where no such thing existed. Therefore, Mujib was campaigning very hard. He had to put up with numerous handicaps and was constantly being charged with this and with that. His opponents did their best to twist, distort and divert

the whole thing and to blow it out of all proportions. But Mujib did not give way; he doubled his efforts, vigilance and dedication.

One of the instances given to me by Amjadul Huq, now the Press Attache of free Bangla Desh government in New Delhi (he heard it from one of the associates of Mujib), shows that Mujib like a good general, would not relax till the battle was won. The scene was Mujib's bedroom and a young man full of enthusiasm and elation had come to him. He and Mujib had virtually won their respective seats and the young man had come to congratulate Mujib and get a pat from him for his own victory in elections. The whole election was not yet over and the campaign was still going on for some other seats. Mujib smiled but was again the hard task master that he is. 'Now go, go to your area and work for the success of your friends. This is no time for congratulating each other. The time for celebration will come but this is not the time for all that'. This was the attitude of Mujib who knew what to do and when to do it.

Young people were the greatest asset for Mujib and his Awami League. Students and workers were his chief supporters. People of all religions were his staunch helpers. Some of the other parties like Aatur Rehman's National Progressive League, and of course Bhashani's Awami Party had boycotted the elections and Mujib was also asked to do the same. But he refused to oblige them and instead launched a mass struggle for people's rights. Mujib's point of view was that if some parties did not contest the elections their case goes by default and then Gen. Yahya Khan would either have his henchmen to form a government or he would have a pretext to postpone transfer of power to civilians, and the people will miss chance, if there was any, for the development of Pakistan, specially of East Pakistan, on

democratic lines.

This stand, surprisingly, was opposed by a small section of Awami Leaguers also and there was a tiny break away group the members of which either joined other parties or formed another independent party named Bangla National League. They were more militant and wanted a radical programme. But by and large their appeal was limited and none of them seemed sure of their stand. They were divided again and one of the Bangla National Leaguers, Begum Amina, a former prominent worker of Awami League, opposed Mujib in one of his constituencies, Dacca North East. She was trounced by a majority of over one and a quarter lakh of votes. Mujib also won from another Dacca ward, unopposed.

Various parties had diametrically opposite stands. That ranged from enlightened ones on educational, social and religious matters, to parochial ones like strict adherence to all that has been said in the *Quran* and *Sunnah* in all matters of state. While Awami League had made its stand very clear on what it will do about agriculture and industry, foreign affairs and services (besides the six-point programme), not many others were keen or willing to spell out their programme specifically and clearly. The programme of the Awami's, even at its face value, looked more convincing, rational and reasonably progressive.*

Electioneering was hectic and Mujib was busy almost all the twenty-four hours. He kept his followers also extremely busy for these were no ordinary elections. Firstly, elections on such a big scale and on the basis of adult franchise had never taken place in Pakistan, and secondly, there were other hostile elements who were bent upon seeing that elections did

*See Appendix.

not result in Awamis securing a majority. It is said that even the President was indirectly helping these elements to see that Awami League did not get a majority. But in the absence of concrete proof to the contrary I would presume that the elections were by and large fair except that blood flowed, not infrequently, in the streets of some of the cities of Pakistan and troops kept patrolling in big cities. The elections were by and large surprisingly fair. It is also proved by the fact that had they been otherwise the results would have been different. Mujib's party bagged 167 out of 169 seats from the Eastern region of Pakistan and in the provincial assembly elections the success was equally amazing. Here the Awami League got 288 seats out of 300. This was ample reward for the services rendered by the Awami League under the able presidentship of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman.

The results of the elections were a personal triumph for the Sheikh who, being a tremendously capable organiser, had outwitted all the others in parliamentary and constitutional game of elections. He had won the battle of the ballot. It was made possible by the opportunity of service that Mujib got because of the terrible cyclone also. This fact was mentioned even by opponents of Mujib when they said that Awamis had exploited the sentiments of the people to the full. But who had prevented the other parties from exploiting the same? As a matter of fact the Awamis were the only party who went to the entire length and breadth of the cyclone-affected areas to give succour to the people. It was selfless service, not only in times of emergency like that one but it was always so. Yahya's bullets reached the East Pakistani countryside much quicker than his relief supplies. What could the people remember? They remembered the Sheikh who had stood by them in the hour of their need.

It is reported that when the cyclone came even the aid sent by the British reached earlier than the one sanctioned and sent by the Pakistani authorities in Islamabad. What more apathy and callous indifference could there be by a ruler for one of the parts of his own territory!

Sheikh Mujib had made it amply clear that his six-point programme, and the supplementary programme, was a referendum and people who voted for him and his party had clearly manifested their support for full autonomy as envisaged by him. Sheikh's victory was hailed by all well-meaning sections. Even Gen. Yahya Khan declared that elections were free and fair and the results were hailed by him. However, he took the entire credit for arranging these fair elections in Pakistan. In any case the presence of a host of other parties and their diverse interests ensured a freer poll and Mujib reaped the richest harvest.

Commented Amir Taheri, of Kayhan International of Iran, on the elections: 'Everywhere one goes the visitor is confronted by small wooden boats hanging high from the windows or standing beside shops and houses. The wooden boat is the symbol of the Awami League that after a decade of persecution has again risen to meet the challenge of re-constructing Pakistan. The revival of Awami League reminds one of the legendary Phoenix that rose from the ashes. The man at the oar of the wooden boat is Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, a tall, slender, soft spoken man of the middle class who has devoted his life to defending the rights of some 70 million people who have suffered injustice for nearly two decades. Mujib is perhaps the most accessible politicians of Asia today. In East Pakistan everyone knows what Mujib stands for. In the rest of the world, however, he is perhaps the most misrepresented of all Pakistani leaders. Before meeting

him we had heard many conflicting tales about him. The only thing we were sure was that he had won the *most clear-cut victory in history of free elections in the sub-continent as a whole*'.

But Mujib had perhaps committed the greatest crime ever committed by one person in Pakistan : he had won a thumping majority in the elections, first ever held in Pakistan. Sen. Kennedy said at the press conference he addressed in New Delhi on August 16, 1971 that the only crime of Mujib is that he had won the elections.

Yes, he had committed a crime and that 99 per cent of the people in East Bengal had also committed the same crime for they were solidly with him. No matter what his enemies say, he was the undisputed leader of East Pakistan.

The reason that gave him this massive mandate (it was not 'minority vote—majority of seats', but both) was his absolute sincerity. He was no self-seeker or power-hungry as Yahya shamelessly depicted him later. Mujib wanted to undo the wrong done. He wanted a democratic federal state on the basis of his six-point programme.

Mujib rightly hailed his party's overwhelming victory as the victory of the suffering millions of East Pakistan. Mujib declared that he wanted to satisfy the aspirations of the people of East Bengal and he assured the other provinces in West Pakistan of his total support in their struggle to emancipate themselves from the oppression of the feudal landlords and big business. Mujib was treading dangerous grounds and he should have known but a man of Mujib's calibre is always undaunted and, he spoke the truth. He had become a Messiah for the down-trodden Bengalis about whom Sadar Ayub had written in his book *Friends not Masters* in a most derogative manner, betraying his hatred for the Bengalis. He wrote : 'East Bengalis, who constitute the bulk of the

population, probably belong to the very original Indian races. It would be no exaggeration to say that up to the creation of Pakistan, they had not known any real freedom or sovereignty. In addition, they have been, and still are, under considerable Hindu cultural and linguistic influence. As such they have all the inhibitions of down-trodden races and have not yet found it possible to adjust psychologically to the requirements of the new-born freedom."

Ayub was given to airs and this shameless exhibition of superiority complex was totally stupid, incorrect and thoroughly disgusting. But Ayub could not be stopped from what he had to say and that's why Tariq Ali, the left wing student leader of Pakistan, had to say this about Ayub's 'masterpiece': "The book is a semi-literate mixture of the paternalistic and bourgeois ideas implanted in Ayub's head during the Sandhurst days, and the Pakistani press was hysterical in its praise. It should have made Pakistani intelligentsia weep with shame: but the large majority welcomed the book as a masterpiece. Ayub himself said: 'You should study this book, understand and act upon it... it contains material which is for the good of the people'. The book is beneath contempt and if it had been written by a British Viceroy he would no doubt have been recalled to London."

In spite of what Ayub thought and felt about the Bengalis, they had done a miracle and showed beyond any shadow of doubt that people did not have the slightest love for the military rule. That East Bengalis were politically more mature and choosy was also proved in unequivocal terms.

Mujib was elated at his victory but at the same time he made it clear that the real task lay ahead and he expected every right-thinking man to put his shoulder to the wheel. He said: 'The time to get down to framing of the constitution had come and the Awami League

would precisely follow the mandate of the people and try to give a constitution that will guarantee East Bengal regional autonomy on the basis of the six point programme.

At no time did Mujib suggest any secession or made unilateral declaration of Independence. He was surprised when someone asked this question, which had become more relevant after a couple of months of the elections. His correct reply was that why should he secede? He was in majority and the majority do not want to secede. The whole situation had changed and Mujib saw that he was on the threshold of one of his dreams being realised—that the regime became democratic and political disparity was gone.

Mujib gave a ray of hope also to West Pakistanis who were suffering under the feudal landowners and were being crushed under the pressure of big industrial and business magnates. They were better off than the majority of Bengalis, no doubt, but their best was just not good enough. The common people in West Pakistan were oppressed and Mujib had their welfare also in mind.

But this unimaginable success of Mujib and his party shook Bhutto and 'like-minded leaders' of West Pakistan. The Pakistan Muslim League and the People's Party leaders were perturbed at this sight and started growling at it. Qayyum group let it be known that Mujib's victory had given him dictatorial powers and it had thrown to the winds the Islamic ideology on which Pakistan was founded. Just because Mujib stood for secularism and tolerance and was not taken in by slogans like 'Islam in danger' and similar humbug he had become a dictator! It was sheer nonsense but it was there and was becoming more and more vociferous as the ruling coterie and like-minded leaders realised that in the future set up of Pakistan they will be

nowhere. Most perturbed was Bhutto whose dream of becoming the Prime Minister of Pakistan was shattered. It was not clear who gave him the idea that he could have become the Prime Minister unless it was Yahya Khan himself who had all his cards in his hands and had made up his mind to thwart the smooth change-over to civilian and popular rule. But even that would have meant the end of Bhutto's schemes.

In any case Bhutto wanted a negotiated settlement with Mujib—I have failed to understand the purpose he had in mind. If one party gets all the seats from one region and by virtue of that obtains absolute majority in the parliament, could anyone prevent its taking over the administration just on the plea that it got its majority from one region only? That is not done and no one could do it in a democratic society. But in a country that boasts of extra-constitutional and extra-ordinary situations anything can happen, and it happened in the present case where the people of a whole region were sought to be strangled because they had voted in a particular manner. An undisputed and popular leader is sought to be tried and hanged by a military junta for the only fault that he got a massive majority in the elections ordered by the junta itself under its own rules and procedures.

It was clearly the sign of betrayal and shape of things to come but politics is politics and if it is coupled with Pak military's evil genius it is the death-knell of democracy. How that happened is also a shocking story.

14

The Long Wait

ELECTIONS were over in the first week of December and the whole picture emerged by the middle of the same month. The next step that had to be taken was absolutely clear; there was no ambiguity about it. Mujib demanded an early session of the Assembly and rightly so. The Legal Framework Order did not specify the dates for convening of the constituent assembly but after the elections were complete there was no reason whatsoever for delay. The only possible reason for delaying the assembly session was that the President waited for different political leaders to give vent to their feelings and to see if something for the advantage to the military ruler could come out of it. But this was an unbecoming approach as the Commander-in-Chief was powerful enough to decide that no elections would be held in Pakistan but having ordered one, he saw it through and hailed the verdict.* Yahya Khan possibly could not go back on his words and was just waiting for his opportunity.

Mujib was firm on his six points on which he had won the elections. What else could be expected of him?

General Yahya Khan went to Dacca in January 1971 and had two meetings with Mujib. It was an amicable

*Yahya Khan sent congratulatory messages to different party leaders for their victory and the satisfactory conduct of the elections. He called upon the newly elected members to honour their commitment to the electorate who had reposed confidence in the policies and programmes of their parties.

talk and though details were not given out it was enough when the President of Pakistan said that Sheikh Mujibur Rehman was the future Prime Minister of Pakistan. What more could be expected from the parleys, and satisfaction was expressed in several quarters. Of course Bhuttos and Qayyums had their blood pressure shot up but that was due to their own unfair attitude

Qayyum was at first more vocal than Bhutto though there was little to choose between the two in that respect.

Bhutto had offered to negotiate with Mujib on constitutional issues. For him it was a terrible prospect to sit as the leader of opposition for at least five years. In his demand for autonomy Mujib had been assured support by several elected members of the Assembly from other parties including that of Bhutto. This was a terrible development for the former Foreign Minister of Pakistan. He had bagged quite a few seats in the elections no doubt, but that was not enough to take him anywhere near the Government unless he entered into some kind of arrangement with Mujib. That the Awami League was in majority and did not need any support or concurrence from any other party was apparent but Bhutto did not sit quiet. His ever-active and over-active brain was searching and seeking some other solution where he could fit in as someone important. Ideas came to him and he started working on them.

In spite of the fact that President Yahya Khan had expressed his satisfaction over the results of the election, it was obvious that the military junta was loath to give up power, comfort and influence. It was a fact that military officers in Pakistan lived in luxury; they were given extra comforts and incentives. The very poor lived in slums at a stone's throw from their bungalows and villas. The military officers were treated like VIPs.

For them no effort was spared. And they were the *Rajas* for 13 years.

There was another aspect of the story. These Pakistani officers of the armed forces had no brilliant careers—in education, in culture and in human values. On the contrary, in schools and colleges they were the drop-outs, hoodlums and tough guys who joined the armed forces. The bright boys invariably joined the foreign service and the administrative services. The militarymen were ones who had been a terror to their class-mates and neighbours. This fact is stated and corroborated by several people who know Pakistan and its armed forces inside out. That's why it is easy to get Ayub Khans, Yahya Khans and Tikka Khans. The Pakistani armed forces cannot boast of Thimayyas, Choudhuris and Manekshaws.

These tough guys who were the hawks in the armed forces were the real rulers of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Yahya Khan is also one of them no doubt but he is on the stage while the others are back-stage actors in the sordid drama of playing politics with the life of the country and its people.

Mujib was busy consulting his colleagues and other elected members of Awami League on future course of action. He was serious and got down to prepare a draft constitution. Awami League formed a sub-committee for preparing a draft for the other members of the constituent assembly. It could still be a party draft and not binding on all the members of the assembly. It had to come before the Assembly for all to have a chance to discuss and vote. But Bhutto had invented an objection and started hammering it. Said Bhutto : 'The future constitution could not be framed by the Awami League in its internal talks ; it has got to be done in the Assembly.'

Sheikh Mujib had only to refer him to the six-point

programme and the elections fought on that basis. Sheikh's point was that it is not Awami League alone which was now in favour of a constitution based on the famous six points but several members of the Assembly from Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan and NWFP were also in full agreement with him and were prepared to co-operate in the Assembly. Even otherwise Mujib was in a majority but with this added support he was confident that at least two dozen other members would vote with him in the Assembly. Another point that he had in mind, and which he made clear before a meeting of the newly elected members of his party was, that the sooner the constitution was framed the better it is for the country and the people. At least they would get down to real business and administrations of the country on right lines. But Bhutto had his own ideas and the President was also there to back him.

Thus the trouble started. Gen. Yahya Khan had his own ideas and together with Bhutto's he sought to consolidate his own position and a sinister plot emerged.

Bhutto warned that the Awami League alone could not frame the constitution sitting in their office. Moreover, he argued that one region alone could not frame the constitution. By that he meant that people like him should have a veto in everything that the majority wanted to do. There was no question of the Awami League sitting in their office and imposing a constitution on the people of Pakistan. Mujib had made it very clear that the Awami League would like to hear every sane and sober voice, every right-thinking member of the Assembly before a draft could be finalised for placing before the Assembly formally. But Bhutto went to the extent of threatening to boycott the Assembly. Bhutto was not content with that and he went straight to the two sky-jackers of Indian plane at Lahore after meeting

Sheikh Mujib at Dacca and conspired to have the plane blown up to further deteriorate relations between India and Pakistan. The whole purpose was to create a war hysteria so that the Government would have to postpone the Assembly session and then the possibility of Mujib taking over as the Prime Minister would at least recede. Bhutto wanted a settlement on sharing power with Mujib. That was, on the very face of it, absurd. Similarly had Bhutto won an absolute majority it would have been preposterous on the part of Mujib to ask for a share of power. But that happens with democratically inclined people and Bhutto was a man who could not be accused of any such 'crime'.

The President had also, by then, come out openly in support of the stand of Bhutto. He said in one of his statements that 'the people have given their decision in favour of majority *parties*. In other words, the Assembly consisted of two majority parties, one Mujib's Awami League and the other Bhutto's People's Party and power could be transferred to the two, not to one. This was clearly a negation of what was envisaged even in the Legal Framework Order and of course was denial of democratic procedure as is understood everywhere.

Bhutto's anti-India and anti-Mujib campaign was helped by all the Government mass media who openly referred to the skyjackers as freedom fighters. They were wined and dined and inspired and conspired with. The result was the destruction of the Indian aircraft and the atmosphere became more tense. But for the restraint shown by the government of India events would have culminated in a shooting war which the Bhuttos and Yahyas and other headless leaders of Pakistan had all along wanted. On the other hand, Mujib and Tajuddin Ahmad, who was the General Secretary of the Awami League and now the Prime Minister of free Bangla Desh Government, decried this 'war-hysteria which according

to them could never do any good to the country.

In all this confusion the President summoned the Assembly session to be held at Dacca, on March 3. But, coupled with the announcement was the fact repeated by Yahya Khan that the constitution could not be an ordinary piece of legislation and it had got to be an 'agreement to live together'. He wanted all the regions to be satisfied with the draft before it could be passed by the Assembly.

On the other hand, the President was talking about constitution-making and on the other he was quietly sending troops to East Bengal. Already the Pakistani army and air force had held combined exercises at Multan, the big base in West Punjab, and the President had witnessed it.

Bhutto was doling out threats to boycott the Assembly and coupled with it was his ultimatum that if Mujib did not come down on his demand of autonomy he would launch a nation-wide agitation 'from Khyber to Karachi'. Wali Khan and other leaders of various political parties like Council Muslim League and the Jamaat did not endorse the stand of Bhutto and declared their intention to participate in the Assembly session. Their stand was perfectly logical. They said that whatever the differences there were, they could be thrashed out on the floor of the Assembly and not in the streets. It was a fair and legitimate stand and the Awamis did not have any objection to it. On the contrary they welcomed differences of opinion and were prepared to listen to each and every member but they insisted that the Assembly should be summoned as early as possible and the reign of terror should be put an end to. But that was not to be and the President without consulting the majority party leader postponed the Assembly session set for March 3. It was done only two days before the Assembly was to have met and was obviously done on the advice of the

People's Party Leader Bhutto. Besides this, the President removed Vice-Admiral Ahsan who was supposed to be "soft" to Sheikh Mujib. Ahsan's only fault was that he wanted to proceed according to logic and fairness. But it was not tolerated by the hawks in the army and he was removed. Now Ahsan would be arraigned before a military court and another farce would be enacted to frighten the people and punish those who served Pakistan loyally and tried to enhance its prestige in the eyes of the world.

Mizanur Rehman, Awami League acting General Secretary, told me that the President had no authority to postpone the session of the Assembly, once it was summoned. In his own Legal Framework Order the President did not include any provision for the postponement of the session once it was summoned. Once the order was issued for the session of the Assembly it was deemed to have been in session for all practical purposes and at least one sitting was imperative before it could be adjourned or prorogued. It could not be postponed. But it seems Yahya Khan himself was the law. And coupled with that was the *decisive* advice given to the President by his advisor extraordinary Mian Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

On top of it the President had 'India's continued postures of tension given as one of the reasons for the postponement of the session. What could be farther from truth!

It was evident who was calling the tune. It was Bhutto who had cleverly made friends with the top leaders of Army in West Pakistan by declaring that there were three sides of the picture in Pakistan : The Awami League, the Pakistan People's Party and The Army. The implication was that unless the army agreed, nothing could be achieved by the Awami League. That was strange logic and stranger posture to be adopted

after the elections and its verdict, but Bhutto was bent upon doing the mischief. His policy seemed to be that if he could not get his share none else could get anything. This was a dirty game and the President of Pakistan Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan readily acquiesced in that.

Talking about Bhutto and his evil advice even a veteran Muslim League leader of M. A. Khuhro's standing had to concede that the big mischief-maker was undoubtedly Bhutto. According to *Dawn*, Khuhro is reported to have said that Awami League, the majority party, had the right to form a government in the country and the right place for Mr. Z. A. Bhutto's People's Party was in the opposition. Khuhro held Bhutto squarely responsible for the constitutional crisis and the subsequent developments in East Bengal.

The former Defence Minister of Pakistan accused Bhutto and said: After the election results were out Bhutto was completely out of his wits and his public speech in Lahore on February 28, advocating boycott of the National Assembly session was most unfortunate.

That Bhutto and Bhutto alone of all the political leaders in Pakistan had nurtured intense hatred for India is borne out by the statement of Khuhro who said that Bhutto was for a long time itching for a war with India without realising that it might prove ruinous both for India and Pakistan by turning them into another Vietnam.

Khuhro, obviously, has not blamed Yahya Khan for succumbing to Bhutto's pressure on the issue of participation and postponement of the National Assembly session. Anyway, what he said about Bhutto is correct and gives the lie to the propaganda of interested parties and personalities around the Pakistani President that it was Mujib whose attitude was unreasonable and obstructive. What Khuhro demanded recently was demanded by Mujib and the Awami League after the

elections and that was not an extraordinary demand.

Bhutto was always quick to confuse the issues and he did so in this case also. Once declaring that there were three aspects to be borne in mind—PPP, Awami League and the Army—Bhutto came out with a new gimmick saying that the Army and Mujib were conspiring to have the six-point programme as the basis for the new constitution. That was, on the face of it, an absurd surmise and Bhutto must have known that Mujib was the last man to enter into any arrangement with the Army except to see that they are deployed to defend the frontiers of the country.

At one stage he had made the Awami League's and his own stand about the armed forces amply clear. Mujib said that the deployment of the armed forces for running the administration was not proper; it could be done by the civilians. The armed forces were for the protection of the country's frontiers. But in Pakistan the army was the supreme ruler for the last thirteen years, and all attempts to dislodge it from that pedestal were thwarted by people like Bhutto who cleverly tried to play one against the other.

Mujib was bitter when the Assembly session was postponed three days before it was scheduled to begin and most of the members from different parties had assembled in Dacca. Bhutto and his PPP members had not come, for they were sure that the session was going to be postponed. Bangabandhu had described the postponement as 'unfortunate' and 'a dark conspiracy'. He deprecated the decision as it was apparently based on the demand of the minority party leader Butto who was constantly threatening to plunge the country in another nationwide movement for the sake of his whims and fancies. Mujib was surprised at the audacity and stubbornness of the PPP leader for whom, he wondered, no martial law was put in operation whereas East

Pakistan was in the grip of severe martial law regulations. They were sought to be applied to Awami League which was absolutely a constitutional party.

It became clear that the President of Pakistan and PPP leader Bhutto were hand-in-glove on the question of convening the session of the National Assembly and they wanted to have their veto. It was clearly to thwart the fair results of the election and the brilliant victory of democratic forces headed by Sheikh Mujibur Rehman. All the drama of skyjacking of the Indian aircraft, blowing it up and trumpeting the threat of attack from India, etc., were acts and scenes of a well-planned drama staged by producer Yahya Khan under the able direction of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

As the *Indian Express* wrote editorially : 'Now the belief is confirmed that the destruction of the skyjacked Indian plane and the subsequent military measures taken by Pakistan were part of a deliberate attempt to create tension with India so as to provide the military regime with an excuse for withholding the transfer of power to the elected representatives of the people.

But Yahya-Bhutto clique had done the mischief and had unleashed a wave of strong indignation. Dacca and other cities were witness to the spontaneous demonstrations for immediate transfer of power and convening of the Assembly. Peaceful demonstrations by students and workers were attacked by troops and firing resorted to, to disperse the demonstrators. It was done at Dacca, Rangpur, Rajshahi, Sylhet and other places. Mujib was unhappy and his displeasure and anger was greater when Yahya Khan announced his plan to convene a conference of all the political leaders in Dacca for March 10. That was really a cruel and heartless joke and was decried as such by Mujib in clear and unmistakable terms. He said : "What is the use of such a conference when dead bodies were lying scattered about in the streets?" Bhutto and

Qayyum had accepted the invitation to participate in the conference but Mujib saw the utter futility of talks at that juncture. If Yahya was serious in solving the deadlock he should not have created one in the first instance. And if he had become wiser after the event he could have corrected the situation and taken preventive steps himself without consulting the other leaders. In any case the idea of conference amidst booming guns and falling dead bodies was repugnant to Mujib. He himself reiterated his demand to send back the troops to the barracks, failing which the Awami League was to start a widespread movement in the region. Mujib said that the authorities were compelling the people to shed their innocent blood to have their legal and constitutional rights.

The movement for popular and democratic rights spread all over the region and repression also continued unabated. Hundreds were killed in a matter of two days. The reign of terror was let loose by the army and no peaceful demonstration was spared. Hospitals were full with the injured and streets were stinking with dead bodies. In and around Dacca more than three hundred persons lost their lives in one single day of army firing. But that was only a rehearsal of what was to be staged later.

Meanwhile most of the other leaders of political parties had supported Mujib's stand and they also let it be known that no useful purpose was going to be served by the proposed conference. They all rejected the invitation for the conference. What was there for them to attend when Dacca was undergoing a blood-bath? It was sad happening and Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, the iron-willed leader of the majority party in Pakistan, had to bow down before the devil. A dejected man, he issued a statement, which incidentally disclosed for the first time the game of the Yahya-Bhutto clique. He said that he was prepared to

let Bhutto come in to share power. The whole design of sharing power and keeping Yahya Khan on top thus unfolded itself, revealing for the first time, what was going in the sinister minds of the scheming duo.

Mujib said : 'I surrender, if that is what Bhutto wants. I am prepared to have two Prime Ministers'. The scheme envisaged two Prime Ministers of the two wings satisfying Bhutto's lust for power. And on the head of the two wings would continue to sit the 'almighty' President of Pakistan, Army General Yahya Khan. It was thus a plan to keep Yahya Khan also in power and to show to the world a farce of transfer of power to civilians. The President could become a civilian, as Ayub had become, with retrospective effect, and Bhutto could also have the satisfaction of getting the 'gadi' at least of West Pakistan if not of the whole country. Mujib was at first averse to all this distortion of democratic principles and mockery of the results of the elections but circumstances forced him to agree to it. It was a supreme gesture in order to put a stop to the killings of his people who were innocent and who had voted for a new era of democracy and civilian rule in Pakistan.

A prominent Awami League leader told me that Mujib was forced to accept this settlement in spite of the strong advice of his followers who were prepared to 'do or die' but who were loath to submit to this black-mailing at the highest level. But Mujib did not listen to his trusted colleagues who pleaded that it was not what the people of Bengal wanted and that they were prepared to fight to the end to secure their democratic rights. But Mujib counselled patience and said with a heavy voice choked with emotion : 'Look, the people are dying for whom we fought for so long. It was for them that we wanted to have the democratic regime and the new setup. If by conceding that sinister plot we could get this killing stopped, I, for one, would do it.' And

Mujib prevailed upon the others to accept this arrangement which he called 'interim' and advised them to take it in that spirit.

This noble gesture on the part of Mujib did not set the matters right and usher in a spell of peace and normalcy. Though the troops were supposed to be back in their barracks but Yahya Khan's radio announcement setting March 25 as the new date for the Assembly session was itself a grave provocation. It was to warn the people in East Bengal of serious consequences to continue with their demands for restoration of democratic rights as they thought. Yahya Khan made a broadcast on the 6th March and seemingly had ordered the troops back to the barracks but reports were mounting of more and more troops being flown to Dacca, Mymensingh and other cantonments of East Bengal. This fact confirmed the fear that the President had something else in his mind when he made the statement. He had warned the country that he, as head of the army, had the obligation and the duty to see that the integrity of the country was preserved. That was enough of a threat for the people, specially the people in East Pakistan, and the arrival of more and more troops by air and sea was a provocation to the peaceful movement in the region. In spite of the announcement by the President, troops were not completely withdrawn even from Dacca. They indulged in indiscriminate killing. It was thought that the President wanted to intimidate the people of East Bengal into submission and surrender to his point of view. But Sheikh Mujib had not surrendered to Yahya Khan and his offer to share power was of course conditional on return to complete normalcy. He had already served notice to the rulers of Pakistan to see the writing on the wall and if they had not heeded it that was not the fault of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman.

Mujib and his Awami League had embarked upon a course that was fraught with dangers, dangers to their lives and their property. Even the future looked uncertain but Mujib was full of hope and confidence in the success of his programme and when every man, woman and child in East Bengal rose as one man to back his demands, Mujib had no other alternative but to lead them without compromising his principles.

The Awami Leader had by then become the virtual uncrowned king of East Bengal, for which a new name—Bangla Desh—had emerged. Mujib was clear in his mind about the future course of action and he made that very clear. His was a non-violent movement to demand people's rights and exhorted the people to make all sacrifices for the sake of democracy and freedom.

There is a difference in what the Awami League is fighting for now and what it fought for before March 25 when Yahya Khan's bloodthirsty hordes cracked down on peaceful and innocent people of Bangla Desh. First it was only a fight to get democratic rights restored and civil rule established in Pakistan. That was under the broad framework of Pakistan and *not* outside it. Later, after Yahya Khan unleashed his cruel forces on a rampage and genocide of the people of Bangla Desh, it no longer remained a constitutional struggle but was forced to change its character to that of a freedom struggle. Mizanur Rehman categorically told a group of pressmen in New Delhi: 'Sheikh Mujibur Rehman did not declare independence; he was only asking for the emancipation of the people and restoration of the rights of the people to them. But Yahya Khan's forces and brutalities compelled us to change our stand and start a war of liberation. Even then it was not Mujib who made a unilateral declaration of independence. It was done during his absence. And so in strict technical

sense Mujib cannot be accused of starting a war against Pakistan government'.

That Mujib was in a commanding position till a little before the army crackdown was never in doubt. His writ ran large throughout the territory of East Bengal. From the Chief Justice to the lowly placed chaprasi in the government office all obeyed his order. The most impressive display of this adherence to the popular leader came from Chief Justice B. A. Siddiky who refused to administer the oath of office of Governor to Lt.-Gen. Tikka Khan. Though he was not yet the Prime Minister of Pakistan but the fact of his getting overwhelming majority and his prospects of becoming the Prime Minister were never in doubt. He commanded respect from all sections of the people and all the East Bengalis had, so to say, sworn loyalties to him and to him alone. It was not doubted. Telephone, telegraph, postal and port employees were totally with Mujib and carried out his orders and did not report on duty. Many maintain that Mujib was defying the authorities by these acts of his but that was natural. He was expressing the indignation of the people and the elected representatives of the people on efforts to stall the session of the National Assembly and thereby delay transfer of power to civilians. Gen. Yahya Khan had mentioned about this defiance of lawful authority by Mujib and the Awami League but he forgot that by not convening the National Assembly he himself was defying the authority of the people who had given a massive mandate to the Awami League and its leader. Besides, it was a civil expression of resentment, unarmed resistance and disapproval of the ways the President had adopted and a true Gandhian approach to get things corrected and rights of the people restored to them. Mujib had done nothing which could be termed as defiance of the popular will or going against them. That was precisely

the idea behind all the early moves of the President ; was he not on record as having said that he wanted to transfer the reigns of the government to civilians? Mujib was not at all going beyond his mandate and was only trying to portray the wishes of the people and express their disappointment at the tactics adopted by the President and his advisers and friends. Mujib was never unreasonable in his dealings with Yahya Khan and it was proved by many of his gestures towards the President and also Bhutto.

Mujib was invited by Yahya Khan and Bangabandhu's non-acceptance of the invitation was played up by Yahya lobby as affront to the President and a proof of the 'unreasonable attitude' on the part of Mujib. The reason, till a few days back, was a mystery and it was given out only when Awami League acting Secretary-General Mizanur Rehman told a group of journalists that Mujib had called an urgent conference of all the Awami office-bearers during those very days when he was asked to go to Karachi. Mujib could not be expected to go to Karachi just to hear that he had to water down his demands which were a mandate to him from the people of East Bengal. That was the reason Mujib did not go and what was the grand idea of having conferences after conferences when the President was not given to any reasonable attitude and reasoning. He was so much enamoured of Bhutto -- or was it his own perfidy—that he was not interested in a just settlement of the question of having the Assembly meet on the scheduled dates and submitting to the people's will. But when Yahya sent word that he was himself coming to Dacca, Mujib agreed to meet him lest he be taken in as unreasonable, unrealistic and secessionist which he never was.

Yahya went to Dacca on March 15 and started parleys with Mujib. His apparent aim was to bring

about unanimity between the two opposite points of view but in fact he was trying to gain time for putting his plan to action. His Chief of Staff, Gen. Hamid, had asked for a little more time to send and position his armed forces in East Bengal so as to strike most effectively when the signal was given. They were only waiting for the right opportunity to do the most wrong thing ever done by any ruler in recent memory.

15

The Fateful Night

IN HIS parleys with Yahya and Bhutto, Mujib tried to convince them that he never meant to secede and that heavens would not fall by accepting his six points. His logic was that six points were meant only to strengthen Pakistan and make the people more happy and conscious of their rights and duties. They were not meant to weaken the country. But both Yahya and Bhutto were oblivious to all the voices of reason and in accepting the demands of the majority party leader of Pakistan they apprehended their influence and appeal—whatever remained of it—going phut. It was not desirable on their part to stick to their impossible position. The formula they were talking and proposing was never made clear but the fact remains that Bhutto and Yahya for a time followed hand-in-glove policy. When Yahya had his plan ready he left everyone in the lurch and sneaked away.

An instance of Mujib's popularity and wide esteem in which he was held by the entire people of East Bengal was the fact that Yahya Khan had to seek clearance from Mujib for his flight to Dacca. Had Mujib directed that the President of Pakistan should not be allowed to land in Dacca nothing except a massive action by the armed forces could have brought it about. But, as I said earlier, Mujib was not unreasonable and he tried to accommodate every one and every point of view as far as he could. For his real motive behind all his actions was not to break the country but to reform it. But there were forces much

stronger and bigger and unreasonable that were out to wreck the Islamic Republic and blame it all on Mujib and his demands of autonomy and a square deal for the people.

Yahya had inherited the outline of a plan of extermination of the people of East Pakistan from Field Marshal Mohammed Ayub Khan, the ex-dictator of Pakistan. It was a carefully carved-out scheme to annihilate all the intellectuals and politically-conscious sections of the people in East Pakistan. It was the brainchild of the hawks, and Ayub, had he not been forced to abdicate by the pressure of the people and his own military men, would have seen to it that the plan matured and all opposition in East Bengal finished. On top of the plan was the scheme to rope in Sheikh Mujib on charges of treason and conspiracy to overthrow the Government of Pakistan with the help of India. It could have served twin aims of the ruling military clique: finishing Mujib and maligning India which had nothing but goodwill for the neighbouring country of Pakistan.

Yahya followed the policy left by his predecessor and polished it. By the time talks were in the final phase at Dacca at least four divisions of crack Pakistani troops had reached East Pakistan and taken up positions. When all was set he ordered his troops to go in action first against the East Bengal Regiment and then against the East Pakistan Rifles and the provincial Police which consisted of only the Bengalis. All the top officers, numbering about six thousand, were West Pakistanis and they were ordered to disarm the Bengalis. This sparked off a revolt in the organised armed battalions and the police which gave solid support to Mujib. The crackdown was not far away, anyway.

Talks continued till March 21 when Bhutto came

and joined for giving a decisive turn—an about-turn—and the showdown was unexpected. Two days later it looked certain that the talks were stalled and that an uncertain lull prevailed; it was lull before the storm and the whole country waited with baited breath for the outcome.

But none had expected that it will take such a nasty turn and a turn of the page of history of Pakistan unfolding the most ugly chapter in its short life of twenty-three years. The Awami League was expecting something else when on March 25 the President of Pakistan quietly slipped out of Dacca, probably never to come back. Till the end of August he did not muster courage to visit Dacca in spite of several plans.

What happened as the President left is a part of ugly and unheard of history. A reign of terror was let loose on the innocent and unarmed people of East Bengal. It took the form of genocide on a scale never witnessed by any age. Most barbaric crimes were committed in the name of restoration of law and order and preservation of the integrity of Pakistan.

Foreign newsmen were bundled out of Dacca after a careful search for films, tapes, notes and so on. They were re-searched at Karachi airport as they arrived by a Pakistan International Airlines plane, and searched for a third time as they left Karachi for their respective destinations. A West Pakistani security official confided: 'We do not want you to have any permanent record of your stay—you have to rely on your memory for any stories you may write and of course we can always challenge that'. This was the deliberate game of Pakistani authorities to perpetrate the most gruesome crime ever committed on earth and then try to stop other people from seeing or hearing anything about it. But in spite of that the whole world came to know what happened on that fateful night, and subsequently, in

Dacca and elsewhere in Bangla Desh. The world saw films, heard tapes and read stories as vivid as could be. Yahya Khan's terrible tales of torture, tyranny and treachery thus travelled from one corner of the earth to the other.

Dacca city was turned into an inferno, a city of flames and gunfire. Mujib was still in Dacca and till the previous night he had hoped that the President of Pakistan will make some announcement almost agreed to the previous night. None came and instead came the news that Gen. Yahya Khan had quietly slipped away after issuing orders to the army 'to restore law and order' and 'to do their duty'. That was a strange order as the armed forces have the task of defending their country from outside aggression or inside subversion and not committing genocide.

The few newsmen who were staying at the Inter-continental Hotel in fashionable quarters of Dacca were shown mercy by the security staff consisting of army Majors and Lieutenant Colonels. Said one of them: 'We want you to leave as it is going to be a bloody business.' In fact he was telling them that what they had been hearing all night and seeing all the time was not enough and more bloodshed was planned; so, they had better left. One of the military men had also warned the newsmen that since he had killed his own people he would have no regrets if he had to kill a few foreigners also. That was enough proof of the terrible massacre going on in the city and outside it. The army was waiting for the newsmen to leave.

As the newsmen left the next day the hotel official said: 'This isn't goint to be a hotel, it's going to be a bloody hospital', wrote Sydney Schanberg for *New York Times*. The previous night newsmen at the Intercontinental telephoned Sheikh Mujib's house and got the answer that Bangabandhu was in his bedroom. That

was at about 12.20 a.m. About an hour and ten minutes later he was arrested and carried away to await his unknown fate. But the story of that arrest was also a moving and thrilling account of the spirit of the man who went through one round of suffering to another and then to be the uncrowned king of Bangla Desh, before being thrown to human vultures.

A night and a day of killing had left well over fifteen thousand dead and several thousands injured. Mujib's fate was unknown. The Speaker of Indian Lok Sabha (Lower House of Parliament) gave the sad news to a stunned House that Sheikh Mujibur Rehman was arrested. The Prime Minister got up the next moment and contradicting the Speaker said solemnly that she didn't believe the story. She doubted it because it came from Radio Pakistan. But a few days later the story of Mujib's arrest was confirmed and the whole world waited with baited breath for the next move of blood-thirsty Yahya Khan and his henchmen.

The story of Mujib's arrest is a moving and thrilling one and speaks volumes about the personal sacrifice of the man and his sense of dedication for his people, and his concern for their safety.

An aide of Mujib later told that when pressed to leave the house and take shelter at a safe place Mujib said : 'If I leave now and go underground they will burn the whole city to find me'.

Simon Dring wrote for *Dateline Bangla Desh* (Ed. by Ajit Bhattacharjea) that when an army group came to arrest the Sheikh the captain shouted for Mujib. Mujib came down and said boldly: 'There is no need to fire. All you need to have done was call me on the telephone and I would have come'. The captors were brutes and not men of fine taste and dignity. Things have happened in the past when bravery such as was shown by Mujib got immediate reward and the

men were set free. But only the brave can show such magnanimity and it was impossible to expect such a decent behaviour from the troops of Yahya Khan who were crying for his blood. And so Sheikh Mujib was arrested.

Mujib's arrest has a mystery not explained as yet. For one thing Mujib is not with us to explain his decision not to go underground; he is reported to be in Yahya Khan's hands awaiting what further indignities the military regime can think of for him. Secondly, even Yahya regime has not officially come out to tell the world how they grabbed the 'future Prime Minister of Pakistan' and why? In any case Mujib was not found in his house after the telephone calls made by correspondents from Intercontinental Hotel at about midnight of 25-26 March. The only official information was the announcement by Yahya Khan that his trial would begin on August 11 somewhere in Pakistan.

The story of Mujib's arrest throws some light on the courage and sacrifice of the great leader who ignoring all the possible tortures to his person is reported to have refused to go underground and came out before the group of army men who stormed his Dhanmudi house. I have lifted the story as published by *Hindusthan Standard* from their correspondent Tooshar Pandit.

'At 9 p.m. on March 25 Mujib said goodbye to his family and friends. He kissed his six-year-old son, Russel, and then asked his wife Begum Fazilatunnessa to leave the house. She was sobbing, Russel crying. 'You must leave and now,' he said.

'He was particularly anxious to see his wife and his eldest daughter [who was pregnant—YB] spared of indignities. So he asked his daughters, Hasina, married to the noted physicist Dr. Wazed, and Rehana, 14, a student of Dhanmudi girls school, to go away.

'Mujib was not particularly worried about his sons except the youngest, Russel. Sheikh Kamal, the eldest, was 19 and a student of Dacca University. He is a student leader like his father and was fully alive to the situation. So was also Sheikh Jamal, 17, also a college student. Begum Fazilatenessa with her two sons and daughters finally moved out with son-in-law Dr. Wazed.

'But, sixty-year-old maid-servant Rana who had seen Mujib grow up from a boy in Faridpur to the stormy petrel of independence movement refused to desert her master. 'Come what may, I shall not leave you,' she firmly told Mujib. There was another servant, a young boy. He too refused to go.

'A little after midnight, machine gun blast, wrecked the city of Dacca. Mujib had been reclining on his cot with the mosquito net pulled down when loud reports of mortar shelling and the droning sound of approaching vehicles made it amply evident that Islamabad was on war path.

'He telephoned his man in Dacca central telegraph office to scribble a message for him and circulate it throughout the country without delay. To his man in the telephones he asked for a series of cross country connections. Instructions went down the wires, over the phones to his men and supporters : "Pak army has attacked police lines at Rajarbagh and EPR headquarters at Pilkhada in Dacca at midnight on March 26. Gather strength to resist and prepare for the war of independence."

'12:30 a.m. The reports of shelling grew louder—almost to a deafening roar as Pak troops moved closer to Dhanmundi suburbs. Mujib asked his pair of personal guards Raza and Moheuddin to leave the house. "It is my order", he shouted as they appeared reluctant. Finally they walked out of his sight but

kept themselves concealed just outside the residence.

'1 a.m. An army convoy screeched to a halt in front of Mujib's house, about 40 Pakistani soldiers jumped out of their vehicles and crashed through the gates shooting their way through. 40 other men and the officers of the Pakistani army threw a ring around the house.

'1 : 05 a.m. Mujib descended the stairs from his first floor bedroom and emerged on the ground floor verandah. He shouted : "Kill me if you please, but stop shooting down my people".

'The soldiers were still abusing Mujib and Awami League in filthiest terms. Mujib lost his patience. "Behave like civilised people... not like rats and dogs," he said. He was still murmuring something when the troops nabbed three other occupants of the house—Mujib's two servants and Haji Murshed.

'By then Mujib had settled down. He asked the troops to get his luggage. A small bundle wrapped in a coarse mat was put in the army vehicle. Mujib was led to the waiting Toyota landcrusher and driven straight to Dacca Cantt.

'The Dhanmudi residence with poke marks of machine gun blasts was empty now. Pakistani soldiers had thrown a ring around the house. From a distance silhouetted figures—guns held firmly—could be seen moving to and fro.

'They came again, the next day, the Pak troops, around 2 p.m. The soldiers firing machine guns stormed into Mujib's house once again and ransacked it. They brought out some of the papers from the house and made a bonfire of them right on the highway.

'This was a calculated move. It was a diabolical plot to kill Mujib in custody. The idea was that Pak troops would enter Mujib's residence during the day taking special care to attract attention of the residents

nearby. Since Mujib was not there, which the troops very well knew, they would leave the house empty and thereby create the impression in the neighbourhood that the Pak army had failed to arrest Mujib. Once this impression gained ground it will be easy for Pak army to kill Mujib in custody and deny knowledge of his arrest.

'In fact they could create some doubts and confusion among the people. Since both the East Bengal Regiment and Pak troops wear the same Khaki uniform, for sometime people liked to believe that Mujib had been taken away by EPR men to safety. This was what Islamabad wanted the people to believe.

But for some reason Islamabad changed its mind. And, Radio Pakistan after about 48 hours of studied silence, finally announced the arrest on March 27. By then Yahya had outlawed the Awami League.

'The two servants who were arrested with Mujib were later released but the fate of Haji Murshed is still anybody's guess.

'One who saw it all but prefers to remain anonymous for fear of reprisals against his family and friends still in Bangla Desh broke down in tears while giving the details of Mujib's arrest. "Fie on us... we could not stop him from being taken away by the army though we were so near, and yet so far from him", he said as if in penance.

'What happened next is still to be known fully. One report says Mujib was flown to Karachi on March 26 morning. From Karachi to confinement at Attock Fort near Peshawar.

'According to an eye-witness Mujib was in Karachi airport lounge on March 31, when a team of government photographers came to take his pictures in custody. It was around 9 : 30 p.m. To him it appeared rather significant that a PIA Boeing was parked on the

runway. He felt that the aircraft had just come from Dacca with Mujib or going there with him.

'At any rate the reports circulating in Rawalpindi and Karachi said that the Awami League leader was on a hunger strike. He would not touch the food offered by his enemy—the killers and murderers.

'By the first week of April Mujib was in Dacca. He was in confinement at Dacca Cantonment. Mujib went on with his fast. Independence or death, he vowed. And all Pak attempts to persuade him to take food failed.'

Reliable reports had also said that Mujib became critically ill and lost considerable weight. Even Yahya Khan had to tell the world that a doctor is attending on him when he announced that Mujib was alive 'today' but no one knows what will happen tomorrow. He may die a natural death.' Even then army doctors were trying to pump food into Mujib to keep him alive for an eventual trial on charges of treason.

It was Mujib's failing health which prompted Rawalpindi spokesman Major Gen. (now Lt.-Gen.) Akbar Khan, Director-General of the armed forces intelligence services, to turn down the requests made by some reporters in Karachi for an interview with the Awami League leader in custody. For one thing, Mujib is not in a condition which would do credit to Islamabad.

His condition even now causes anxiety. No one knows how much and what sufferings are there in store for a man so loved, so dedicated and so great.

Mujib's voice has been silenced for the time being by the bloodthirsty military maniacs of Yahya Khan but his message has been echoing throughout the Bangla Desh and the freedom loving world. That fateful night in Dacca may have sealed the personal fate of Mujib and his lips but who can say with confidence that it has not aroused the whole world !

PART IV

Talks of A Trial

India Shares the Agony

The Concerned World

Memories That Last

The Political Solution

16

Talks of a Trial

AFTER the confirmation of the news of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman's arrest, even though from semi-official sources, it was left to the imagination of the people about the next step. Many thought that Mujib had already joined the immortal band of martyrs who have made the biggest sacrifice for the freedom of their country. Speculation was rife everywhere about Mujib's safety and about the next step of Yahya Khan. Then came the news that Pakistanis were collecting evidence to proceed against Mujib and frame charges. A large number of Pakistani intelligence personnel went to Dacca and other places in East Bengal to prepare a case with the help of witnesses and evidence, both written and oral. All the preliminaries were gone through and the world waited for yet another proof of utter uncivilised behaviour on the part of the military regime of Pakistan.

On May 5, Lt.-Gen. Akbar Khan, a real 'hawk', of the Pakistani armed forces intelligence branch, disclosed that Mujib was very much alive and in good health. This was the first official briefing which confirmed that Mujib was in Pakistani hands and was still alive. Of course the Pakistanis have lost all credibility but coming as it does from a General, the news could be taken at least on its face value.

Gen. Akbar rejected requests of correspondents for an interview with Mujib, but he assured the press that Sheikh Mujibur Rehman would be tried according to the law of the land. Which law he was referring

to was not made clear and where was the legal provision for charging a man, who had swept the polls, of high treason were also not clarified. 'After all', the General remarked, 'we are passing through a crucial stage when India with her mighty armies is threatening Pakistan'. He went on to say that Indian army was poised against the Pakistani territory and any day war could break out.

Perhaps this sort of attitude and India-bogey could shield anything that is fishy and not straight!

Then it was the turn of the 'great President' of Pakistan himself who said the Sheikh would be tried according to the law of the land. He also did not clarify what was the law of the land and what could be the punishment for those who obstructed the natural change-over after the elections, held under the rules and procedures laid down by the President himself. He would only say that the Sheikh was alive and doing well 'under the circumstances'.

But one remark of Yahya Khan left everyone guessing. 'The Bengali leader', said Yahya, 'was alive and well in the highest class of a West Pakistani jail. But, I cannot vouch for Sheikh Mujib's life "beyond today".' He continued: 'He will be tried and that does not mean I am going to shoot him tomorrow. He can die a natural death. He is in the highest class of jails. He does no labour, has a small room with a bed, a fan, hot water and a doctor in attendance.'

This last phrase also worried the world. What is the doctor doing with Mujib? Are they force-feeding him? Is he critically ill? Many questions came up but no clarification.

Yahya's assurance about a lawyer to be provided to Mujib was not enough. As a matter of fact it had no meaning at all. Because in any case, the trial was supposed to begin before a military court. It was to be held in camera and before persons nominated by Yahya

Khan who himself was the accuser. General Yahya Khan also pre-judged the issue when he said that the charges against Mujib were punishable by death. Like any other cleverly mean politician he also let it be known that the power to review the case rested with the President—the mighty President of Pakistan, General Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan, the scion of a Persian chieftain. The man was talking as if he was the sole authority under the law whereas he and his predecessor General Ayub Khan were both usurpers and were Presidents without any legal sanctions and authority of the law to hold the highest office in Pakistan.

Meanwhile reports continued to come that Mujib was being tortured and was on hunger strike. A close veil of secrecy was thrown on the entire thing. None knew where Mujib was being held, none was allowed to meet him ; no family member, not even his wife, could contact him. This was stricter than at the time of the so-called Agartala Conspiracy Case, when Begum Mujib was allowed to see her husband. But as I have maintained elsewhere also, Yahya Khan is behaving more callously and is tougher than Ayub. Whatever the attitude, it was evident that both Ayub and Yahya were afraid of the popularity of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman and wanted to find a way out to finish his influence if finishing him was not possible. Ayub got an opportunity to finish him but had to quit himself. Now is the turn of Yahya Khan who also manipulated and got an opportunity to liquidate Mujib. How far would he go is anybody's guess but that he will try his best and not leave the matter to get the better of him is certain.

August 9 is *Quit India* Day in India when the whole country pays tributes to the martyrs of August 1942. This day is observed as *Shaheed Day* in India but this year it was made into an 'Expression of Solidarity with Bangla Desh and Endorsing the Prime

Minister's Policy' Day in Delhi. A huge procession was organised—it was not a well disciplined and well organised show—and lakhs of people were brought from outside Delhi. Yahya Khan selected that very day to announce that the trial of Mujib would start, in camera, on August 11 somewhere in West Pakistan and by a military court. No foreign lawyer would be allowed to plead on behalf of Mujib. The charges against Mujib were said to be 'waging war against Pakistan and other offences'.

A government statement announced that the accused will be given proper opportunity to prepare his defence and will be provided with all the facilities permitted by law, including engaging counsel of his own choice, provided such counsel is a citizen of Pakistan.

The whole world was shocked at this farce of a trial and it was more so when Sheikh Mujibur Rehman was on record saying that he will not secede and that the majority does not secede. He did not declare independence unilaterally and did not instigate his people to wage a war against the authorities in Pakistan. In any case, had he also done so his case could have been justified on numerous grounds but the fact was that the Awami League leader was only guilty of the 'crime' of bagging an absolute majority in Pakistan's National Assembly and an overwhelming majority in the East Bengal provincial assembly. He was guilty of conspiring with the people for their legitimate rights and there is no law-court worth its name in any free country where this could be regarded as crime. But Pakistan and its military rulers are not behaving as a civilised set up. Sometimes I wonder how on earth did Yahya Khan agree to have the elections and even after the verdict why did he let so many weeks pass before taking action to strangle democracy and freedom. The only explanation is that he wanted to camouflage his desire

to remain at the head of everything and that the people should remain under the false illusion of democratic civilian rule.

In any case, when brute power is in the hands of unauthorised persons none could expect legitimate and proper method of working as accepted by the free world community. So Yahya had his day as every dog has his. It was announced that Mujib was to appear before a military court and the whole thing would remain secret 'for fear of Indian infiltrators.' I wish some of the Indians had done it and freed Mujib from the clutches of the blood-thirsty hawks of Yahya Khan.

Then came the news that Mujib had declined to have a counsel and had challenged the competence of the military court to try him. There was no provision in Pakistani law, for the trial of a civilian by a military court and that too the man who was the real Prime Minister of Pakistan.

That Mujib's trial is a farce and not in conformity with the normal procedures of law is self-evident. He was the leader of the majority party duly returned in the elections held under the direction of the military rulers and under the Legal Framework Order promulgated by Yahya Khan himself. His victory was hailed by the President and he had even congratulated the people and expected of them to follow the programmes of the parties they had voted for. And it was General Yahya Khan himself who hailed Sheikh Mujibur Rehman as the future Prime Minister of Pakistan. He did not do anything to warrant a charge sheet of such a grave nature. Surely it was one of those barbaric manifestations of a medieval tendency so prevalent in some of the semi-primitive and feudal societies. Pakistan is on the same uncivilised path and the events in Bangla Desh as well as the so-called court martial of Mujib are evidence of that tendency.

Mujib's fault was that he wanted the implementation of the pre-election promises, the verdict of the people and translation of the result of the election into a change-over. He wanted the President of Pakistan to honour his own commitment to the nation and to fulfil his promise of transfer of power to the elected representatives of the people. In no country could this be regarded as a crime, more so if the same head of the state had ordered elections and had hailed the triumphant man as the future Prime Minister of the country.

In any case, Yahya Khan had taken a dangerous step and the world opinion expressed itself unmistakably in favour of Mujib. There were also a few discordant voices but those were drowned in the roar of protests echoed everywhere.

About the trial itself there were several reactions which held Yahya Khan and not the Sheikh guilty of anti-people acts. It was pointed out that Mujib's trial would not only contravene the United Nations Charter but will also put to shame all the traditions of normal civilised behaviour expected of governments and government functionaries.

Taking a very objective view of things I am constrained to remark that the trial of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman contravenes all that is said in the U.N. Charter inasmuch as it is an encroachment on the sovereignty of the people of Pakistan. Mujib is the leader of the majority of the people in Pakistan and to try and deny him of his due is to mock at the people who have elected him. Any attempt to deny him that right is to deny the people of Pakistan their right to elect a man of their choice to run the government. This is a far greater crime and the person or persons responsible for such a behaviour should be squarely condemned and suitably punished.

The UN guarantees people their right to be governed by whomsoever they choose. In this case it was, without doubt, Sheikh Mujibur Rehman and his Awami League. The trial is against the fundamentals of United Nations as put in the preamble of the UN Charter. It says : '...To reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small...' And further : '...and for these ends to practice tolerance and live together in peace and with one another as good neighbours, and to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security.'

Which of the above is Yahya Khan observing? And would it be too much to demand Pakistan's ouster for non-compliance of the UN charter? But why of Pakistan? As the Indian Prime Minister also said : 'We cannot have any ill-feelings towards the *people* of West Pakistan.' It is the government, totally illegal and unconstitutional *military regime of Pakistan* that had not only gone against all the norms of civilised behaviour but has also put to shame the entire people of Pakistan. I am sure the majority of common people of Pakistan are aghast at this barbaric move.

Genocide in Pakistan and the trial of Mujib are two heinous crimes in the face of tremendous opposition. This happened with the connivance of some people and in a way some countries whom history will never forgive. From whatever has been reported about events in Bangla Desh the whole truth could not come out. It will be a hundred times more ghastly, more blood-curdling and more heinous than what we have come to know. And the perpetrators of it all are Yahya Khan and his military clique and political upstarts like Bhutto. They are to be hauled up before the bar of world public opinion and they will surely be sent to gallows.

There is another aspect of the situation that is at once strange and ridiculous. President Yahya Khan, in the case against Mujib, is himself the accuser, the prosecutor, the jury and the judge. How is that? He has himself branded Sheikh Mujib as traitor and now he wants Mujib to defend himself. How can a man who himself is the highest court of appeal and supposed to be dispenser of justice first accuse a man and then send him for trial. The whole trial is thereby vitiated. Would the court not be prejudiced because the President has already passed his judgment on him? Will this not be sheer mockery and a farce? And, then, why do the Pakistani ruling clique want to have the trial in camera if they have nothing to hide? In any case the position of the President of Pakistan is extremely vulnerable and will not stand scrutiny in any court of law provided it has some independent standing.

This trial raises some fundamental and basic questions of law and constitutional importance.

According to N. Rajagopala Ayyangar, an ex-judge of the Indian Supreme Court, this trial is in violation of international law. In the first place, though the trial is stated to have already commenced, there is no inkling of what is the specific charge against Mujib. It is said that the charge is of waging war against Pakistan. The ingredients of this offence under the law in force in Pakistan could only be the same as are contained in section 121 of the Indian Penal Code. That Code also became the law in Pakistan when it was carved out of India.

That this charge could not be established against the Sheikh has compelled the Pakistanis to have the trial in camera. It is impossible to establish Mujib's crime under that law. One has to recall what happened on March 25 in East Bengal. That day, on the night of 25th March, Sheikh Mujib was arrested. Till then

there was no armed uprising or declaration of a war in East Bengal by the Awami League or any one. It was neither a declared war nor an undeclared one. There was no anti-Pakistan movement at all. Whatever movement there was could only be termed as a popular movement for the restoration of the rights of the people and for the convening of the National Assembly session of *their own* country.

Had there been an armed uprising in East Pakistan, where was the necessity or significance of continued negotiations with Mujib and others. No supporter of Yahya Khan outside his hawkish coterie could substantiate the charge that prior to March 25 Mujibur Rehman was waging war against Pakistan and an armed uprising had taken place in the region. That this charge and allegation were totally false could be borne out by the despatches of over a score of foreign correspondents to their newspapers wherein they have not mentioned anything about an uprising or an attack on non-Bengalis by the Awami League and Sheikh Mujib. Even Yahya Khan had also failed to mention this charge against the Awami League leader in his infamous broadcast of March 26 from the safety of Islamabad. In any open trial and in the presence of independent observers the charge of waging a war or aiding and abetting that offence will fall flat on the ground. This the whole world knows to be a blatant lie and that it is a hollow charge is firmly established.

As has been rightly said that 'publicity in the administration of justice is our surest guarantee of our liberties'. Conversely, where there is no publicity there is no justice. And on top of it President Yahya Khan himself declaring publicly that Mujib might be hanged is prejudging the issue. This is just not done if someone is going to face charges in a court of law. But in this case the court of law is not a regular civil court where

judges come and hear evidence based on the laws of the land. It is reported to be a military tribunal where the judges may be Brigadiers, Generals or Colonels whose very existence is based on the mercy of the Supreme Commander of Pakistan and who are as much versed in legal provisions as a pig in the finer points of classical music.

A reader N. Chanda writing in *Motherland* maintains that the trial of Mujib is 'political hijacking' and is not valid under any law. It is preventable by UN action under articles 3, 8 and 21 of the Human Rights Charter.

The second argument of N. Chanda is that in East Bengal two belligerents are at war with equal rights. Because of this recognition, the captured Awami League fighters get the status of belligerents (as recognised by International Law) with specific rights of being treated not as domestic criminals but as prisoners of war. The Hague regulations and the Geneva convention of 1949 which supplement the Hague regulations amply safeguard the status of belligerents. One interesting article of Geneva convention is that the occupying power cannot transfer by force inhabitants individually or en mass to other territory or deport them.

But in this case a point to keep in view is that when Yahya Khan cracked down on the unarmed people of East Bengal they had not committed belligerency. Surely the people in East Pakistan had not till then risen in any violent movement and hence the charges against Mujib are not only absolutely vague but without any substance and validity. That this trial is a sham trial and devoid of any legal authority whatsoever is proved by several sets of arguments and circumstances. Unless the military regime is bent upon taking its pound of flesh as the revenge for the licking they received at the hands of the civilians, the military hawks.

are not on valid grounds at all.

Yahya Khan is also on record saying that Mujib could be executed for high treason. As a matter of fact what he said was that he could not give an assurance that Mujib would not be executed. This is clearly total disregard for the laws and propriety and is a highly deplorable act. A President saying all that rubbish even before the court has been constituted and hearing began! This is clearly pre-judging and prejudicing the issue. It is another provocation for the people, the right thinking people of the world. Yahya Khan seems bent upon presenting a farce of a trial and maybe has already executed the beloved leader of 75 million people. Gen. Yahya Khan told Amir Taheri of Kayhan International of Tehran that 'this matter is before the military justice'. What sort of justice could be dispensed by military in Pakistan is too well known to be repeated here. The whole world got a rude shock by the exploits of the Pakistani army and the Supreme Commander of the same army refers to its 'justice'. How disgusting!

Amir Taheri is a veteran journalist. He had earlier interviewed Mujib a little after the elections and had written a very graphic account of the popularity of Bangabandhu. Wrote Taheri then: 'Before meeting him we had heard many conflicting tales about him. Some described him as a crypto communist determined to divide Pakistan and bring the eastern wing into the Chinese orbit. Others spoke of him as an agent of the Americans claiming that CIA spent some \$20 m. to ensure his victory at the recent elections. A third group accused him of wanting to create a Pan-Bengali state that would include both East and West Bengal (of India).

'The only thing we were sure of was that he had won the most clear-cut victory in the history of free

elections in the sub-continent as a whole. Talking to scores of East Pakistanis we later found out that at least 99% of the population are solidly behind him. There is little doubt that Sheikh Mujib, no matter what his enemies and rivals say, is the undisputed leader of East Pakistan. Two years ago he was still in gaol but today he is a power to be reckoned with.

'What has caused this unprecedented popularity? To begin with, we must point to Mujib's utter sincerity. He has not entered politics solely to seek power. He has come to redress the wrongs done to his people and to create a new, united Pakistan based on social justice.

'Again and again during our conversation Mujib emphasised that those who described him as secessionist were slanderers of the meanest kind'.

What more proof was needed to show that Mujib was really a popular leader and that he did not want to secede. Mujib was for a strong and united Pakistan and had ridiculed those who alleged that he wanted to secede. 'Why should a majority secede?', he used to tell his critics. And he was right. When he had the whole country before him to rule as the democratically elected Prime Minister, why should he be content with almost a sixth of the entire area of the country? Mujib had never, never thought of seceding.

The real culprits and the guilty men, in order of merit, are: General Mohammad Yahya Khan, President of Pakistan; Gen. Hamid Khan COS, Lt. Gen. Tikka Khan, Lt. Gen. Gul Hasan. Lt. Gen. Akbar Khan, Lt. Gen. Peerzada and Lt. Gen. Omar Khan, who died under mysterious circumstances recently and whose death was kept secret by Pakistan for reasons best known to the ruling coterie itself. These guilty men of Pakistan (and there is Ayub also but he could give alibi) are not only responsible for this massacre and genocide in East

Pakistan but who are guilty of trying to kill a whole civilisation. They are the accused before the bar of world public opinion and must be tried and hanged. Among the civilians I am prepared to pardon most of them but Bhutto deserves to be tried as a criminal of the worst type and should be punished for his sinister role in the whole dastardly drama.

What General Yahya Khan and his close associates have done in Bangla Desh is a crime against humanity and the attempts at the extermination and genocide must be treated as war crimes of the worst type and the accused should be punished suitably, under International Law. Even the Nazi Generals were tried and sentenced for extermination of the civil population. The whole world returned the verdict of guilty and in this case even the future generations will be convinced of the shameless guilt of Yahya Khan and company. Here the barbaric President of Pakistan is trying to prove the innocent as the guilty. 'The right of the people to rise in rebellion is recognised under the International Law', wrote the eminent lawyer R.K. Garg of the Supreme Court of India. He says: 'History of liberty and the history of democracy would never have been written if every Mujib was to be tried in secret and punished with death because he raised the voice of the people for freedom. In fact the crack-down came first; operation terror was started much before the people in Bangla Desh rose in revolt'.

One hundred and seven Supreme Court advocates in India decided to write to the Chairman of the International Commission of Jurists at Geneva demanding a public enquiry into the crimes of Gen. Yahya Khan against the people of Bangla Desh.

They authorised the President of the Supreme Court Bar Association, M.C. Chagla, former Foreign Minister of India, to send the following resolution to Geneva :

'Members feel strongly that Gen. Yahya Khan is guilty of crimes against humanity more serious and more heinous than those for which German Generals and others were tried at Nuremburg and condemned.

'That there has been attempted genocide of a whole nation and massacre, butchery on a massive scale of the people of Bangla Desh is now an undisputed fact. Gen. Yahya Khan can say that it was not his finger that pulled the trigger but the mind and the intention, also the decision behind that finger, was undoubtedly that of Yahya Khan.

'The Nuremburg trial has laid down as a principle of International Law that a person cannot escape his responsibility for a crime against humanity by pleading that in fact he did not commit the crime but only issued orders in furtherance of state policy. In fact the person in authority who makes such a crime possible is more guilty than the person who merely carries out the orders.

'In view of the overwhelming evidence of the inhuman and barbarous policy pursued by Yahya Khan towards the people of Bangla Desh it is but right that the International Commission of Jurists which exists to see that the rule of law and not the rule of jungle prevails over the world, should hold an enquiry, preferably a public one, into the policies, actions and crimes of Yahya Khan'.

These eminent lawyers of India were not moved by sentiments but by cold law and justice. Men have been tried and sentenced for lesser crimes than those committed by Yahya Khan and his clique in Bangla Desh and they must not go unpunished.

A noted jurist of international standing and reputation also held the opinion that Mujib's so called trial was illegal and invalid in the eyes of International Law. Subrata Roy-Chowdhury, Chairman of the Committee

for the review of the United Nations Charter set up by the International Law Association (Indian Branch), said in a statement that the trial is *ultra vires* of Article 3 which is a common article to all the four Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949 and Pakistan is a party to the convention.

Roy-Chowdhury said that Article 3 applies to the case of every armed conflict not of an international character occurring in the territory of any of the parties to the Geneva convention. It primarily applies to a civil war where there has been no recognition of belligerency. So it is applicable to Pakistan where at present there is an armed conflict even conceding that the conflict is not one of an international character. Article 3 protects persons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of the armed forces who have laid down their arms. Sheikh Mujib is obviously entitled to the protection of Article 3.

Roy-Chowdhury said this Article imposed a number of 'minimum' obligations of humanitarian character upon the state of Pakistan. One of these obligations was complete prohibition at any time and any place of the passing of sentences and carrying out of the executions without a previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognised as indispensable by the civilised people.

Secret trial of Sheikh Mujib by a military court without the assistance of a lawyer freely chosen by the so-called accused is completely *ultra vires* of the provision of this Article.

Roy-Chowdhury also pointed out that Pakistan had voted in favour of a resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly dealing with the basic principles for the protection of the civilian population in armed conflict of all types.

This particular resolution laid down eight basic principles which, *inter alia*, stipulated that fundamental human rights, as accepted in the International Law and laid down in international instruments, continue to apply to situations of armed conflict.

A reference was also made to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN General Assembly and said it permitted complete freedom of political opinion and entitled every individual to a fair and public trial by an independent judiciary in respect of every penal offence brought against him.

'The proposed trial of Sheikh Mujib by President Yahya Khan is a complete denial of this elementary Principle', said the jurist.

Roy-Chowdhury said President Yahya Khan has no jurisdiction in international law to try the freely elected majority leader Sheikh Mujib for the alleged crime of launching a movement for self-determination.

From Jefferson's famous Declaration of Independence in 1776 (USA) till the codification of the principles of International Law, approved by the General Assembly on Oct. 24, 1970, it would be seen that the only test of the legitimacy of a government is whether it is freely chosen with the consent of the people. It is only a state possessed of such a government that can raise the defence that self-determination does not permit the dismemberment of a country.

When a majority is denied its democratic right to have a constitutional regime, its revolutionary right to dismemberment of the country, if necessary to achieve self-determination, is not only fully consistent with the contemporary norms of International Law but also recognised as early as 1860 by Abraham Lincoln.

Yahya Khan never had any title to the Government of Pakistan. Whatever title he had, he had forfeited by his illegal recourse to the forcible suppression of

self-determination. He is a usurper of a type whom Lincoln used to compare with a serpent.

The President of Pakistan is drunk with power that he thinks he enjoys. It is reported, despite secrecy of the strictest order, that Mujib was put behind bars of an unfinished jail in Lyallpur. The top security precautions are said to be taken because of fear of Indian infiltrators making a bid to free Mujib. How I wish it could have been done for the freedom lovers all the world over could not bear to see a beloved leader of millions and millions of people languishing in jail, waiting with uncertainty for his fate.

Yahya Khan is reported to have started the trial once and postponed it the next day. It was said that evidence is being concocted and fake witnesses are being tutored to implicate Mujib in some kind of a treason charge. Even journalists were tried to be recruited who could say on oath that they had a chance to hear Mujib give a fiery speech in favour of secession and for declaring war against Pakistan. Some journalists were reported to have been forcibly taken to Lyallpur from Dacca where they were supposed to have been present at meetings addressed by Bangabandhu and they have to depose that they saw the blueprints of armed revolt prepared by Mujib.

The Pakistani Government has now announced the names of the 'judges' who are serving on the military tribunal. That does not alter anything.

Mujib's lawyers are not allowed to see him or have consultations with him nor is he given access to legal advice otherwise. All that the President of Pakistan said was that he will be provided with a Pakistani lawyer. Reports followed that A. K. Brohi flew to the place where Mujib was kept and came back and kept quiet. Mujib's lawyers tried to enlist the International Commission of Jurists and their former Assistant

Secretary-General Sean McBride was also contacted. He was neither given permission to arrange for legal advice for Mujib nor was allowed to see the client.

An Indian lawyer Balraj Trikha was reported to have got an assurance from Pakistan High Commissioner in New Delhi that his request to defend Mujib would be duly forwarded to Islamabad. That was the end of the matter. Trikha complained in his letter to the High Commissioner that the present procedure of holding the trial in camera gave strength to the belief that the trial of some fake individual was being conducted in the name of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman.

He told the High Commissioner that in case his prayer was turned down by the President for an interview he would be constrained to take up the question before the court of International Justice under Articles 2, 3, 4 and 8 of the UN Human Rights Charter.

It seemed that Pakistan's mad President had ignored all the concern and sympathy shown by the world from one corner to the other and decided to go ahead 'in the interest of justice and fair play.'

Nothing has been heard since August 11 when Mujib's trial was supposed to have opened and postponed. Since then only Brohi's name appeared in connection with the trial and the message said about the 'anxiety of the President for making available the best legal advice for Mujib' It seems that the President of Pakistan wants to give the farce of a trial a finesse. It was reported on Pakistan's National Day, August 14, that the trial is postponed but nothing was said officially. May be the rulers of Pakistan have accomplished what they wanted.

But it must be remembered that Sheikh Mujib is a civilian and the Geneva convention also gives him the right to be tried as a civilian which means that he must be proved guilty before he is declared guilty. And there

is nothing to prove that the Sheikh is guilty of waging war against Pakistan. If conspiring with the people for the restoration of their rights is a crime then Mujib is guilty but let the Pakistani military junta show the guts to charge him for that !

17

India Shares The Agony

THE Prime Minister declared in Parliament that any action by the West Pakistani military regime against Sheikh Mujibur Rehman would have its impact not only in Bangla Desh but all over the world.

Vice-President Gopal Swaroop Pathak, Chairman of Rajya Sabha (the Upper House of Parliament) said that the Sheikh was facing a trial unknown to civilization. If he is punished it will be a crime against humanity. The Vice-President was a successful lawyer in his days as active practitioner and is an authority on International Law. He should know what he was talking about, and he did not leave any ambiguity about the legal aspect of the so-called trial.

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi promptly wrote to several Heads of Governments all over the world drawing their attention to this sham trial and expressing the deep sentiments of the people about it. She also wrote to the Prime Minister of Communist China and it was reported that she had even offered to meet him anywhere, any time to talk about Bangla Desh, among other things.

The attitude of China on Bangla Desh was fairly known and in spite of the known friendship between China and Pakistan, Indira Gandhi boldly took the initiative and wrote a special letter to Chou En-lai. It was also known for quite some time that Chinese support to Pakistan could not be taken for granted because, the Chinese are no fools. They will weigh the chances of Bangla Desh emerging as an independent

country and then decide about it. The chances of the emergence of a free Bangla Desh were and are bright. China could, therefore, never afford to antagonise 75 million highly volatile people permanently.

In any case Prime Minister Indira Gandhi at least wrote to many world leaders pleading the case of Mujib whom even the trigger-happy President of Pakistan had declared as the 'future Prime Minister of Pakistan'. In the letters she sent to the Heads of Governments she emphasised this fact, if any one had forgotten it, that Sheikh Mujibur Rehman had won the elections to Pakistan's National Assembly by a big margin and he was the undisputed leader of the majority of the people in Pakistan. To put him up for a trial by a military court and to sentence him would be the height of folly and the world community should exercise its pressure on President Yahya Khan to stop this trial. A political solution should be found out and for that Sheikh Mujibur Rehman should be immediately released.

The External Affairs Minister, Swaran Singh, warned Pakistan of serious consequences that would follow court-martial and execution of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman. He expressed India's condemnation of President Yahya Khan's statement that he could not say 'whether the Sheikh would be alive when the National Assembly of Pakistan met'.

Swaran Singh's reference to the still-born National Assembly of Pakistan was significant. Yahya Khan had already announced that he would disqualify several Awami League MPs and get others elected in their place. That 'command performance would' be mockery of democracy.

Mujib's trial was regarded as a trial of Indian people also and they really felt as one with the people of Bangla Desh on this issue. Almost five hundred

members of Parliament from all parties, except the Muslim League, addressed a memorandum to UN Secretary-General U Thant appealing him to save the life of Bangabandhu. That document also warned that if any attempt is made to try the great leader by the military government of Pakistan, waves of terrible reaction will sweep Bangla Desh and for the consequences of which the Government of Pakistan will be held responsible. Prof. Samar Guha, MP, made the announcement about the memorandum before pressmen.

Later, the Muslim League also joined in demanding the release of Mujib. The League appealed to the Prime Minister to take all steps to save the life of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman. The Muslim League MPs had not signed the previous memorandum of 500 MPs as they had insisted on redrafting the memorandum.

The League said that Sheikh Saheb is not a mere individual but is the accredited leader of crores of people. Any harm to his life would naturally inflame the feelings of his followers and others. The secret trial of the person of the standing of Sheikh Saheb, the denial of the common legal right of engaging his own advocate from anywhere and the President of Pakistan's anticipation of the verdict of the trial are all preposterous.

Protest demonstrations were held all over India, in cities big or small. Bar Associations passed resolutions condemning this trial. Public meetings were held to denounce the move to 'murder' Mujib for the crime of winning the first ever national elections in Pakistan. Newspapers were full of articles and letters to the editors explaining all the aspects of the sham trial and warning Yahya Khan of the serious consequences of pursuing with the trial. Bharatiya Jana Sangh organised a twelve-day *Satyagrah* to press for the

recognition of Bangla Desh and Sheikh Mujib's release. Thousands of Jana Sangh workers offered *Satyagrah* and went to jail in an unprecedented support to the Bangla Desh cause and for Mujib's release. The New Congress, on the other hand, organised a massive demonstration to express support to the Government of India's policy on Bangla Desh; although they also demanded that trial should be stopped and Mujib's release effected.

When Indira Gandhi sent urgent appeals to various Heads of Governments, the so-called trial of Mujib was reported to have started. But undeterred by it the Prime Minister addressed her letters to Heads and Foreign Minister Swaran Singh sent an urgent appeal to U Thant for immediate and effective intervention to save the life of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman.

The Prime Minister's message spoke of the need to prevail upon the President of Pakistan to make him take a realistic view in the larger interest of peace and stability of this region. She also expressed apprehensions that the so-called trial would be used only as a cover to execute Sheikh Mujibur Rehman.

In his message to U Thant, Swaran Singh urged the UN Secretary-General to take urgent steps to request the Government of Pakistan not to take this action which is certain to make their difficulties and ours very much worse.

Indira Gandhi wrote : 'The Government and the people of India as well as our Press and Parliament are greatly perturbed by the reported statement of President Yahya Khan that he is going to start a secret military trial of Mujibur Rehman without affording him any foreign legal assistance. We apprehend that this so-called trial will be used only as a cover to execute Sheikh Mujibur Rehman. This will aggravate the situation in East Bengal and will create a serious

situation in India because of the strong feelings of our people and of political parties. Hence our grave anxiety. We appeal to you to exercise your influence with President Yahya Khan to take a realistic view in the larger interest of peace and stability of this region'.

This message was sent to over two dozen countries through Indian missions.

Swaran Singh's message to U Thant said : 'We are distressed and shocked at the announcement made in Rawalpindi that they propose to commence Sheikh Mujibur Rehman's trial from tomorrow. This announcement comes in the wake of the several categorical statements which have lately emanated from President Yahya Khan about the Sheikh's culpability in waging war against Pakistan and in having indulged in "treasonous activities". Sheikh Mujibur Rehman is an outstanding leader of his people, much beloved and much respected. His victory at the polls in Dec. 1970 was perhaps the most magnificent one in any similar election anywhere in the world in recent years. Our people, press, Parliament and the Government are all convinced that the problems which have been created for us by the Pakistani action in East Bengal will be multiplied ten-fold if the Government of Pakistan do something precipitate and extreme in the context of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman's life and welfare. We would like to appeal to Your Excellency to take urgent steps to request the Government of Pakistan not to take this action which is certain to make their difficulties and ours much worse. Anything they do to Mujib now, will have grave and perilous consequences'.

Almost every day the Indian Parliament discussed the topic and one or the other Minister of the Government sounded a warning note to Pakistan against doing some unpleasant thing. Defence Minister

Jaggiwan Ram told the agitated Lok Sabha the other day that the Government was as much agitated and exercised as the House was on the reported threat of the Pakistani military junta to execute the uncrowned leader of Bangla Desh, Sheikh Mujibur Rehman. He said that the Government wants to see that justice is done to the Sheikh and a settlement is reached which would be to the satisfaction of the elected representatives of Bangla Desh.

On another occasion the Foreign Minister told the Rajya Sabha that any attempt to go through the farce of a trial of the Bangla Desh leader would make the situation even more complex. This would not be a good, fruitful and constructive way of dealing with the situation.

At a public meeting organised to demand the release of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, central ministers and others spoke of the urgency of setting the Sheikh free and arriving at a political settlement with the people of East Bengal.

Minister of Industries. Moinul Huq Choudhury, said that the Government of India would not let the democratic aspirations of the people of Bangla Desh trampled upon by the military junta of West Pakistan.

Minister of State Inder Kumar Gujral said if Sheikh Mujibur Rehman was allowed to be murdered by the Pakistani army, everybody would lose faith in the United Nations. The Communist leader Prof. Hiren Mukherji asked the international community to act 'while there was still time'.

The Congress (N) General Secretary Henry Austin pointed out that if the head of a nation was allowed to be court martialled and executed by an alien dictatorial regime it would go against International Law and civilised behaviour. Two other prominent members of Parliament, Prof. Rashiduddin and Akbar Ali, said that

a regime guilty of genocide had no right to call itself an Islamic state. Sheel Bhadra Yajee, MP, and others also spoke on this occasion observed as 'Release Sheikh Mujib Day.

Andhra Pradesh Urdu journalists came to Delhi with a memorandum signed *with their blood* demanding square deal to the people of Bangla Desh and Sheikh Mujibur Rehman. They met the Prime Minister also and presented the memorandum at the Pakistani High Commission. They urged Indira Gandhi to make all the efforts to secure the release of Sheikh Mujib. They presented the Prime Minister with a huge framed photograph of Bangabandhu. The memorandum they presented at the Pakistani High Commission also demanded immediate and unconditional release of Mujib.

Almost all the newspapers have been publishing letters to the editors every week from numerous readers demanding the release of Mujib and condemning the farce of a trial. One of the letter writers wondered how the President of Pakistan did not find fault with Mujib till March 25 and continued to talk to him and then all of a sudden broke the talks and flew to West Pakistan leaving the army to start the biggest manhunt the world has ever seen. Rama Avtar, a reader, wrote that this sort of court martial of Mujib is barred by UN Human Rights Charter (Articles 3, 8 and 21). The Hague regulations and the Geneva Convention fully protect the status of political opponents and they also prohibit transfer and deportation of freedom fighters to other territories. Sheikh Mujibur Rehman has not done anything since March 25. Even before that what he did as an opposition leader was to raise his voice against exploitation of East Pakistan by West Pakistan.

There is still a feeling in many quarters that Indian Muslims have not reacted the way they should have

done when lakhs and lakhs of their co religionists were dying in Bangla Desh. This is partly true but to brand every Muslim in India as Pakistani agent would also not be true. Conceding that there are quite a few who have opposed Mujib and his stand but by and large either they are not enlightened enough to understand the situation correctly or they have been misled about the stand of Awami League.

Out of the five hundred members of Parliament who sent a memorandum to U Thant were quite a good number of Muslim MPs. The other day sixteen other Muslim members of Parliament in a separate appeal to all Muslim countries urged them to raise their voice against the un-Islamic act of staging a mock trial of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman by the Pakistanis. They said: 'This is a barbarous act and against the ethical values of Islam'.

The statement further said that the entire people of Pakistan would be degrading themselves in the eyes of world in general, and of Muslims in particular, if they allowed President Yahya Khan to commit this un-Islamic act of barbarity which is unprecedented in the history of mankind.

They expressed the hope that the voice of freedom-loving peoples of the world would have its desired effect on the Pakistani authorities and they would release Sheikh Mujibur Rehman unconditionally to pave the way for a political settlement of the problem. This alone would be in the interest of Pakistan.

The signatories to the statement were: Abdul Qayyum Ansari, Akbar Ali Khan, Nurul Hasan, Chaudhary A. Mohammad, Sher Khan, Aziz Imam, Mohammad Usman Arif, Rasheeduddin Khan, Ghulam Nabi Untoo, Baharul Islam, Lutful Haque, Chaudhary Tayyab Hussain, M.N. Hashim, Jamilur Rehman, Ziaur Rehman Ansari and Mohammad Yusuf.

It was heartening to see Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah coming out to issue an appeal to Gen. Yahya Khan to withdraw the prosecution against Awami League leader Sheikh Mujibur Rehman. Sheikh Abdullah is the one person who has maintained excellent relations with all the Pakistani High Commissioners to Delhi and oblivious of what his other Indian fellow citizens think about this, he has frequent dinners with the Pakistanis. In his utterances he seems more to be a Pakistani than an Indian. Whenever a resolution condemning genocide in Bangla Desh was moved in an organisation, Insani Biradari, the Sheikh was either absent from the meeting or he opposed the move. He is the person who, at the time of East Bengal cyclone last year, went to Pakistani High Commissioner Sajjad Hyder in New Delhi and handed over Rs. 50,000 supposed to be for East Bengal cyclone relief. Surely, this amount did not reach East Bengal. It must have gone for the purchase of arms to crush Bengalis in East Bengal or spent on luxurious living of Pakistani military rulers, senior diplomats and bureaucrats and for spying.

Anyway, this was a rare occasion when Sheikh Abdullah at least spoke for saving the life of Mujib. He sent a telegram to Yahya Khan and though it contained a few phrases such as 'in a spirit of forgive and forget', etc., I welcomed it all the same. I am reproducing here the text of his telegram for the readers to know what goes on in his mind. But in spite of the move in Insani Biradari scuttled by his own opposition, at least in case of Mujib he could plead with his friends or masters, I really do not know. The text is as follows :

'The unfortunate developments in East Pakistan constitute basically a human and not a law and order problem.

'A broad-minded liberal policy is therefore called

for to bring about a lasting solution. I am convinced that the trial of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman is not going to help this process but on the contrary will further complicate issues.

‘Need of the hour is to heal the wounds and not further exacerbate the feelings. I therefore earnestly request you to take a fresh view of the matter, with draw the prosecution of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman and in the spirit of forgive and forget enter into fruitful negotiations with him to envolve a political settlement acceptable to and honourable for all concerned’.

By whatever desire this letter was prompted I am prepared to give the devil his due that after all such a letter came from Abdullah.

As I have described earlier, demonstrations were held almost daily in one city or the other of this vast country of mine and people demanded the release of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman. I will only limit myself to one of the demonstrations for its value as expression of the intellectuals’ deep desire for Mujib’s release and their determination in freeing Bangla Desh from the clutches of Yahya Khan.

That day in the middle of August thousands of persons staged a massive demonstration first before the Bangla Desh mission in Calcutta and then in front of the Consulates General of USA, USSR and UK demanding the release of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman.

The demonstration was organised by Bangla Desh Liberation Council of the Intelligentsia, the Bangla Desh Teachers’ Association and the Bangla Desh Film Artistes’ and Technicians’ Association.

Chittagong University Vice-Chancellor Dr. A.R. Mullick addressed the rally. He said that it was a sham trial, only to justify the murder of Mujib. But all the evil designs of the Pakistani military junta would not defeat the people’s liberation struggle in Bangla Desh.

Dr. Mullick said Mujib's life should be saved not only for the 75 million people of Bangla Desh but for all the democratic peoples of the world and for the sake of world peace.

Prof. Vishnukant Shastri of Calcutta University hoped that the common people in West Pakistan would launch a movement in support of the demand for the release of Mujib.

Sheikh Mujib's Press Secretary I. I. Badshah said that if we failed to secure the release of Bangabandhu we would be answerable to the world's oppressed humanity whose cause Sheikh Mujib upheld.

Other speakers, including Zahir Ahmad of the Bangla Desh Liberation Council and Hasan Imam of the Bangla Desh Film Artistes' and Technicians' Association, said if President Yahya Khan believed that he would be able to suppress the aspirations of the 75 million people of Bangla Desh he was sadly mistaken.

The meeting in a resolution appealed to governments and the people all over the world as well as the United Nations to make General Yahya Khan desist from the heinous action and effect the release of Bangabandhu. If the evil plan was allowed to be carried out it would lead to serious consequences in this part of the world—consequences for which Gen. Yahya Khan and his collaborators will remain guilty for ever.

After the meeting the demonstrators, carrying play-cards and banners containing slogans against Pakistani genocide and conspiracy, went in a procession to different foreign missions and handed over memoranda to the respective officials.

I shall fail in my duty if I do not point out that there are unfortunately some sections in India that hold a different view about the whole question of Bangla Desh and the farce of a trial of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman. They are certainly in a hopeless minority but the tragedy

*The new generation
made destitute by
Pakistan found new
hopes and new de-
termination in India*





Bullets for the butchers

We built this light metal float bridge for them in Bangla Desh

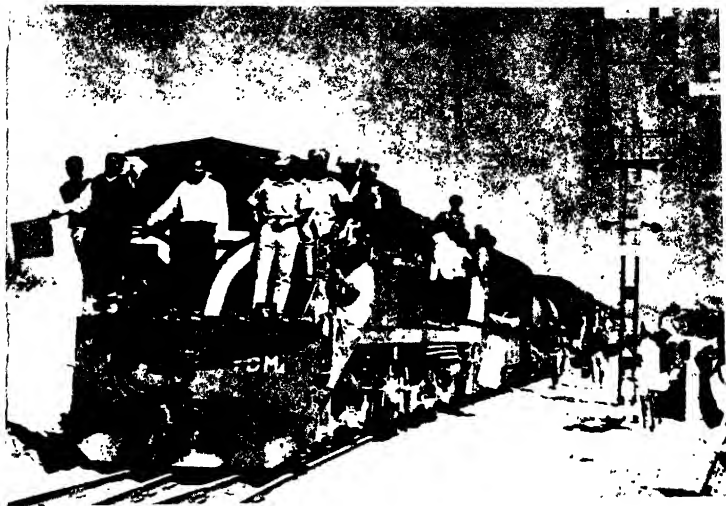




Men of the Bangla Desh liberation force on the alert

Looking for the enemy





"A Joy ride" in the enemy territory

Supporting the cause : Friends of Bangla Desh hold a rally outside the Pakistani High Commission



is heightened by the fact that they own newspapers and can write any rubbish they like. In the name of Press Freedom they flourish and the Government of India is either not keen to take action against them or cannot do so for various reasons. In any case the stand that they have adopted since the beginning of the trouble is anything but Indian or Bangla Deshi. At times one could take it as Pakistani propaganda coming straight from the mouth of President Yahya Khan or any of his ambassadors or Press Counsellors.

I am referring to certain newspapers of India—the Muslim Press which often serves the interests of people and countries other than India and Bangla Desh and causes other than those of freedom and democracy.

One of the Urdu papers of Delhi advised its readers to forget Sheikh Mujib and counselled the Government of India also to do the same. It is one of the very few papers which regard the Mujib trial also as an internal affair of Pakistan. The paper went on to give a long sermon for not interfering with the trial of Ali Sabry and others in Cairo. By advising its readers not to make any demand for Sabry's release, etc., it wanted its readers to note that the same policy should be adopted in the case of Mujib.

Several Muslim papers had all along been advocating against the 'secessionist Awami League' and its six-point programme. Many of them have written justifying the action by Yahya's army in East Bengal. I have discussed and mentioned these in detail in my previous book *Bangla Desh—Birth of A Nation* because most of that was about the general question of Bangla Desh and was not confined to Sheikh Mujib.

These instances that I am giving about Mujib's trial and the Muslim Press writing about it are evidence of thinking that is far removed from the mainstream of Indian thinking. No doubt every one in

India, so far, has the right to think and express himself freely but on certain vital topics what the majority of Indians think and feel—and should think and feel—is the mainstream of India's life and thought. To go far away from it is to sound a disconcerting note which is not in tune with the general thinking. Here is a case when the thinking of the Government and the people of India is identical—neither says that Mujib's trial is an internal affair of Pakistan and that the world should neglect him. Any one tendering advice to the contrary is neither faithful to himself nor to the lofty ideals of democracy and freedom. A man struggling for decent democratic rights does not remain an ordinary criminal, it isn't an internal matter for any one country. Situated as the Awami League and Sheikh Mujib are in the specific struggle now going on in Bangla Desh, there is no parallel anywhere in the world. Any one trying to equate it with any other struggle anywhere is bound to commit a serious mistake that should be avoided at all costs.

Let the world know and understand that the whole country—an astonishingly overwhelming majority in this country—is for a fair deal to Mujib and stoppage of this sham trial, unconditional release and a political settlement with him and the Awami League.

The Concerned World

HAS anyone heard of 75 million people on trial all at once ? Is it not strange that almost five million people are being kept as hostages ? How many names come to one's mind for whom the whole world has expressed sympathy, solidarity and concern ? The only name in recent memory is that of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman who is reported to be waiting for a trial ordered by the military machine of Yahya Khan that goes by the name of the Government of Pakistan.

Mizanur Rehman, the youthful acting General Secretary of Awami League, told pressmen in New Delhi that it is not Sheikh Mujib alone who is on trial but the whole 75 million people of Bangla Desh are on trial. The whole of the West Pakistani armed strength PLUS four or five million West Pakistanis living in Bangla Desh are all hostages, in case.... And the whole world, politicians, intellectuals, artists, workers and others have expressed deep sense of horror at the statement of Yahya Khan that Mujib may not be alive when the so-called Pakistan National Assembly meets by October, 1971. No other leader in recent years had attracted so much attention and indeed no other leader has done so much to deserve that.

Sheikh Mujibur Rehman on trial ! The whole idea is preposterous. It is an outrage on the civilised society and barbaric behaviour by bloodthirsty beasts of Pakistan. It was a fit case for effective international

intervention and a substantial part of it has, no doubt, come out openly against Yahya Khan's designs.

The reaction in Awami League circles and of the free Government of Bangla Desh was immediate and deep. Syed Nazrul Islam, the acting President of Bangla Desh Government, expressed his shock and horror at the inhuman and unthinkable news that the 'future Prime Minister of Pakistan' was being tried by the military usurpers in Pakistan. He has warned General Yahya Khan that any attempt on the life of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman will be avenged in the battlefield and will mean the end of West Pakistan itself.

In a message Nazrul Islam said that Gen. Yahya Khan had no authority to try Sheikh Mujib who is democratically elected head of a sovereign state. It will be the height of barbarity and inhumanity on the part of the military regime of Pakistan to threaten the life of Sheikh Mujib. The so-called trial is bound to be a travesty of justice as the Sheikh will not be tried by an impartial court of justice.

He said : 'The proposed trial did not concern Sheikh Mujib alone but the 75 million people of an independent nation also'.

It was protest all the way from Tokyo to London and from Australia to Montreal. Even some of the sections that regard Bangla Desh question to be an internal matter for Pakistan could not restrain themselves from expressing their deep anguish for Mujib and concern for his safety. How could any one forget that Mujib had won a massive majority in the elections of Pakistan? He would have been the Prime Minister of the country had not a sinister plot been hatched by some interested people.

It was really a spectacle of primitive and feudal barbarity of the worst type. It is sought to be let loose on the leader of millions and millions of people and

rightly the world community did express itself against it. Comments came from many quarters—many more could have come—and wishes expressed for his release and restoration to his proper place.

Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmad warned that the entire South-East Asia might face a serious crisis if anything untoward happened to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rehman. Ahmad said the entire political atmosphere in this part of the world would be jeopardized if the life and welfare of 'our beloved leader' is adversely affected by a fake judgment at the proposed trial. He said : 'The reported trial of Bangabandhu has shocked the entire world. The self-imposed President of Pakistan has no authority to try Sheikh Mujibur Rehman who has proved himself to be a leader through the people's verdict'.

The Prime Minister of Bangla Desh made a fervent appeal to the world and specially to the big powers to come forward to assist in stopping the heinous designs of Yahya regime to execute the undisputed leader of 75 million people of Bangla Desh. He said the life of Bangabandhu is important not only for the well-being of the people of Bangla Desh but also for the maintenance of peace in South-East Asia. History will never forgive the world leaders if they failed to perform their sacred duty of saving Bangabandhu's life.

A prominent newspaper of UK, *The Guardian*, came out in favour of the release of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman and his installation in Dacca which alone could help restore normalcy in East Bengal. The paper warned Yahya Khan that until his Punjabi troops fly back home, Pakistan will remain economically and morally beyond redemption. Then and then alone will the Bengali millions recover a measure of security and trust.

International conferences also took note of the trial and its repercussions. The international conference

held at Toronto (Canada) and attended by noted Indian, Bangla Desh and UK public men, members of Parliament and former diplomats called upon world governments to save the life of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman. In a resolution they said that the secret trial of Mujib offends the principles of rule of law and his execution would end all hopes of a peaceful solution to the crisis in East Bengal. The conference was held on August 19 20, 21. The conference expressed its horror at events in East Pakistan 'which had resulted in major disasters in man's history'.

A member of Japanese Diet, Kanichi Nishimura, demanded the release of Mujib in order to solve the problem of East Bengal. He suggested that U Thant should go to Pakistan and meet Bangla Desh leaders to find the solution of this problem.

Mujib had only committed the 'crime' of bagging the massive majority in the elections. This brought comments from the only surviving Kennedy brother, Sen. Edward Kennedy, who came and toured the border areas to have a first hand knowledge of things. He said at a news conference in New Delhi that Sheikh Mujib should be a free man and that unless a political solution is found Pakistan should not be supplied with any assistance by United States. Back home he urged President Nixon to break off diplomatic relations with Pakistan.

Though the world was expressing concern about the fate of Mujib, there were people who suspected that Mujib might have been already executed by Yahya hordes. It could not be said with certainty if that ghastly act had been committed. And so prominent public men, party leaders, government heads and spokesmen kept on expressing their governments' and their own displeasure at the attitude of Pakistan Government and stressed the need to release Mujib.

The United States of America, though taking sides with Pakistan and continuing to send arms and other sorts of aid to Islamabad, also bowed to public pressure and the Secretary of State Rogers is reported to have conveyed to Pakistan's ambassador, US government's deep concern over reports that Sheikh Mujib was being brought to trial in a Martial Law court.

Over 60 members of the US Congress publicly expressed themselves against the Mujib trial and urged President Nixon to use his influence to prevent it. But neither the President of United States nor the Secretary of State have expressed themselves publicly against this sham trial and the possibility of his execution. It has given rise to suspicion in diplomatic circles that Mujib may have been executed much earlier and the talk of the trial is just to prepare the people for the shock.

A tiny island Cyprus has a dynamic President in Archbishop Makarios who did not emulate the Presidents of bigger countries. He came out strongly to demand the release of Mujib. President Makarios said that the trial is a great mistake on the part of Pakistan Government. If the Sheikh is sentenced it will only perpetuate the trouble in East Bengal.

But the American Ambassador in New Delhi, Kenneth Keating, hoped that steps taken by the US Government in regard to Sheikh Mujibur Rehman will have a positive effect.

The Arab world also woke up and some of their newspapers commented on the secret trial. *Al Ahram*, the influential Egyptian daily, attacked Pakistan for its decision to try Sheikh Mujibur Rehman. The paper said that 'national unity cannot be secured by military or secret trials'. But this did not amount to acceptance of the demand of Bangla Desh, which, the paper maintained, was an internal affair of Pakistan and decried

the separatist move. A few days later this paper again wrote but watered down the original stand and said this was internal matter for Pakistan and maybe the trial was justified.

Far away Venezuela also spoke up and one of the influential papers of Caracas *El Nacional* warned Pakistan that execution of Mujib would provide the last detonator the war needs. His death will signify that war is the only alternative. It will definitely carry the risk of intervention by India.

Nepal was supposed to be more friendly with Pakistan and its ally, Communist China. There also, human response was forthcoming and Nepal Council of World Affairs demanded the immediate release of the Sheikh.

The trial and the secretive nature of it attracted the special attention of the jurists. The International Commission of Jurists in Geneva sent a request to Gen. Yahya Khan urging him to release Mujib and reconsider the decision to hold the trial.

Nigeria, Ceylon, USSR and a host of other countries came out openly against the trial. Sirimavo Bandarnaike, the Prime Minister of Ceylon, expressed her concern to President Yahya Khan in a second communication sent recently. By and large Ceylon has maintained that Bangla Desh is an internal matter for Pakistan, but on the secret trial of Mujib she expressed her apprehension.

UK papers were very forthright and courageous in condemning the secret trial and demanding the release of Mujib. *The Times*, one of the leading papers of the world, wrote: 'The manner of the trial is shameful and it is difficult to have any confidence in such a trial. The decision to have a secret trial is lamentable. The charge of waging war on Pakistan is, on the face of it, absurd.'

Yorkshire Post also demanded the release of Mujib.

A prominent lawyer-member of British Parliament, W. T. Williams, attacked the trial saying it was the continuation of action already declared illegal by the Supreme Court some years ago. Williams had defended the Sheikh at the so-called Agartala case.

Indonesia could not have sat idle. I remember the good old days when Indonesia's President Soekarno paid respects to our President Dr. Rajendra Prasad and it is said he touched Rajendra Babu's feet in the morning when he was staying at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

General Secretary of World Council of Churches, Dr. Eugene Blake, expressed his deep concern. Boston's *Christian Science Monitor*, and Washington's *Evening Star* also commented on the news. Yugoslav Daily *Borba* said that the trial would rekindle passion and make the political settlement of the problem more difficult. It said Mujib was a man who did not want to run away and was guided by non-violence. It was profoundly inhuman to call him traitor which he is not.

Britain's role has not been consistent, as I see it, and it is good that it is not so. First it was a little intriguing, with the Prime Minister and others maintaining a strict copybook posture on the events in Bangla Desh when they characterised the happenings as the internal matter of Pakistan. Later, either due to tremendous pressure of public opinion or some other reason, the attitude of British Government changed quite substantially. Many members of Parliament, and of course newspapers, contributed a lot to this change in attitude. In spite of the fact that the British made it very clear that they have full diplomatic relations with Pakistan and have not given permission to the opening of Bangla Desh diplomatic mission in London, I think the attitude of the British Government has changed in the first five months of fighting in Bangla Desh. As I said the credit for this goes, in no small measure,

to several members of British Parliament who toured India and Pakistan and saw everything with their own eyes.

Peter Shore, one of the British MPs and a former Labour Minister, said that Sheikh Mujibur Rehman's trial was a 'disgrace for Pakistan' and would do most profound damage to Pakistan's international standing. That Pakistan should be contemplating such a trial, in camera, is a disgrace for her.

The Afro-Asian Association of Ceylon was also clear in their stand on Mujib. In a resolution they called upon President Yahya Khan to immediately release Sheikh Mujibur Rehman and allow democratic processes to develop in Pakistan.

On happenings in East Bengal the Association regarded them as a grave threat to peace in the region.

In the East, Manila's influential daily *Manila Times* said: 'By having an open trial Pakistani rulers could have convinced the critics that it is not as bloodthirsty as many are beginning to believe'. Another paper *Manila Chronicle* more straight forward was harsher to Yahya Khan. The paper wrote that the US and UK should bear upon the obstinate regime which knows no better way to hold the country by bayonets and torches. There could be no more shortsighted and stupid action on the part of Yahya Khan's army than to try for treason a Bengali leader whom diplomats in Pakistan consider as the only man alive who could save Pakistan now. Whatever the outcome of the trial, Mujib was already a martyr to the Bengali cause and his death would only harden Bengali hatred and antagonism towards the West. Many diplomats have observed that if Mujib is hanged by the neck Pakistan will hang with him.

From far off Guyana came the voice of Chhedi Jagan, one time Prime Minister. He came to see

things for himself and said in a statement that the bogus trial of Sheikh Mujib should be stopped and the Sheikh be set free. He decried the dictatorship of Pakistan who had failed to heed the wishes of the people and their leader.

Dr. Jagan, the leader of opposition in his country's Parliament, said he would press the Government for granting recognition to Bangla Desh Government. It should be given the same kind of financial aid as was given to African freedom fighters. (During the Lusaka non-aligned Conference, Prime Minister Burnham announced a cash aid of \$ 25,000 for the African freedom fighters).

Amnesty International also came out in support of Mujib's release and its Chairman, Sean McBride, member of the Irish Bar, said that the military court should be disbanded and, if need be, Mujib could be tried by a civil court. McBride vainly tried a month back to arrange legal assistance to Mujib. He said even if Mujib was not represented by any foreigner at the trial, he could certainly be helped with legal advice from any international expert. Even in the 'Agartala Conspiracy Case' a British lawyer, Tom Williams, MP, was the successful defence lawyer. Trial conducted in military courts without restrictions on choice of the defence lawyer fell short of recognised legal norms. Moreover, trial of a democratically elected leader of a vast section of Pakistani people was bound to raise issues of grave constitutional importance. This should be determined by the highest civil court of the country and not by military courts which, by their nature, were intended to be summary courts. By setting up this military court, is there the idea that civil courts were incapable of functioning. If they are capable then there was no need for a military court trying Mujib.

From down-under Australia *Sydney Morning Herald*

wrote that Mujib was the only person who could provide a solution to the crisis facing East and West Pakistan. Sheikh Mujib had the authority to hold an autonomous East Pakistan within the Pakistani confederation. He still had it.

The Federal Republic of Germany's senior diplomat in Calcutta, Wolfgang Behrends, said the other day that the execution of Mujibur Rehman would be a folly on the part of Yahya regime. He assured that West German Government would take up this matter with Pakistan Government so that the military regime was refrained from taking this step. The Sheikh is the only person with whom it was possible for the Pakistan Government to reach a political settlement.

The German Democratic Republic did not lag behind. In fact it was probably the only country which gave positive and reasonable response—when Indian ministers went for enlisting support for Bangla Desh—and their help for the refugees come in large quantity to India. Several ministers of the Indian Government, including the Foreign Minister Swaran Singh, had gone abroad to explain things to the various governments. It was said that the most successful was the mission of Dr. Karan Singh to GDR. He came back fully satisfied with the stand of GDR over the issue of Bangla Desh and Mujib. Said the leader of parliamentary delegation, Dr. Seiber in New Delhi, after a visit of the three-member team to refugee camps: 'They will not go back unless an acceptable political solution is found'. On Mujib's trial, the delegation expressed itself against such a trial and hoped that world public opinion would get the leader released because a solution depended on him.

It was left to the Secretary-General of the United Nations to say something in the matter. This in fact was long awaited. The role of the UN has been criticised.

on several occasions, by the Prime Minister of all persons. She usually refrains from doing this sort of thing, but her patience with UN was over when she said that its role had not been satisfactory. But even then there was the report of quiet diplomacy by U Thant and he let it be known that any developments concerning the fate of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman would inevitably have repercussions outside the borders of Pakistan. The matter, the Secretary-General felt, was extremely sensitive and delicate, falling within the competence of the judicial system of the member state. It was also a matter of extra-ordinary interest and concern in many quarters from a humanitarian as well as political point of view.

Though U Thant conceded, rather surprisingly, that the matter fell under the judicial system of the member state (Pakistan), at least something did come out from the UN Chief Executive. Even this was taken objection to by Pakistan which came down harshly on the feeble effort of U Thant. A Pakistani spokesman said that Pakistan Government rejected the view that the secret trial of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman by a military tribunal would have repercussions outside the borders of Pakistan. Agha Shahi, Pakistan's representative at the UN, sent a letter to U Thant saying that the Secretary-General's remarks exceeded the competence of the United Nations. Agha Shahi quoted the UN Charter to bar the Secretary-General from taking any action or saying anything about the trial, etc. It was like devil quoting the scriptures. Not a single person has been able to see anything in the Charter which barred the UN from taking any action or which justifies the secret military trial of Mujib. Here was the devilish representative of Pakistan trying to take shelter behind something which was just not there. But perhaps feeble efforts like U Thant's could only be countered by strong reactions

by the accused country. Pakistan has been playing that kind of politics ever since it was carved out of India and its aggressive diplomacy sometimes bears fruit and it has been able to get the support and sympathy of many country's on its absolutely unreasonable stand on several issues like Farakka, Kashmir, and now Bangla Desh. Pakistan had been able to get the support of many countries of the Arab world and some of the big powers, but in most of the cases it is the result of big power politics and of course the highly shining outer cover of Pakistan's policy and stand that hides the truth ; and it is the ugly fact that Pakistan is hiding. There are so many skeletons in Pakistan's cupboard and one of these days the whole world will know about them. Mujib was out to expose it when the President of Pakistan came down heavily with the aid of American and Chinese arms to try and put down an idea, a dream and a movement. He will not be able to do so is very clear to me and many others but the nuisance that Pakistani rulers have created will take some time to clear up.

The trial issue of Mujib gave a jolt to several diplomats of Pakistan abroad. The Pakistani Ambassador to Iraq A.F.M. Abdul Fateh and the Asstt. Labour Attache in UK, Fazlul Haque Choudhury said, good-bye to Pakistan's world of perfidy and barbarism and switched their loyalties to Bangla Desh. They protested against the farcical trial of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rehman.

Indeed Sheikh Mujib is being tried on concocted charges by a clique which has no legal right to be at the helm of affairs in Pakistan. The clique has resorted to blatant lies in describing the people's elected leaders as 'traitors'.

The press lackeys of Pakistan, headed by *Dawn* and *The Pakistan Times*, had all praise for Ayub and now:

they are trying to justify whatever is the policy of Yahya Khan. A heavily censored press in Pakistan could not print what the world is saying about their leaders and rulers. It did print something criticising even the feeble efforts of U Thant for the release of Mujib. *The Pakistan Times* asked the stupid question : 'Don't they like the judicial process (of trying Mujib by a military court) ? It was ironical to read the account in a paper who had also printed the statements of Gen. Yahya Khan saying that Sheikh Mujibur Rehman would be the 'future Prime Minister of Pakistan'. Mujib has not done anything since that statement ; whatever he had done was to remind the President of Pakistan of his statement after statement promising early return to civil rule, and transfer of power to the elected representatives of the people. Installation of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman as the future Prime Minister of Pakistan was also promised

The future Prime Minister of Pakistan and the present President of Free Bangla Desh lies in a Pakistani jail (if he is alive as yet) waiting for the implementation of Yahya's promises. Which one is the question !

19

Memories That Last

SHEIKH MUJIBUR REHMAN is a dynamic personality whom it is not easy to forget. He has acquired a reputation, a halo a name that is impossible to obliterate. Even Mrs. Indira Gandhi the Indian Prime Minister, could not hide her feelings for Mujib, whom she said, she had never seen. But, she said in Parliament, He is no mere individual. He is the symbol of the hopes and aspirations and urges of the people of Bangla Desh. He has become the embodiment of the the urges and aspirations of the people of Bangla Desh'.

That was an appropriate expression and Sheikh Mujibur Rehman richly deserves it. Even before reaching fifty he has become a symbol, a hero, a savant, a champion, a saviour and real Bangabandu that represents everything that is good and noble in a human being. Indira Gandhi's letters to thirty-two world leaders denotes the concern in India for Bangabandhu, the symbol, the light.

Mujib is a towering personality, a pleasing personality. He is a dedicated leader, a loving father and an understanding comrade. Sheikh Mujibur Rehman is different from many other leaders, contemporary or old. He combines the simplicity of Gandhiji, the vigour of Subhas Bose and the disarming charm of Jawahar Lal Nehru.

The military dictator of Pakistan, Gen. Yahya Khan, has accused Mujib of winning the elections through in imidation, terror and malpractices. That is a white lie

which reminds me of an anecdote that Mr. Kamal from Bangla Desh told me recently.

Mujib was busy during the elections, operating as usual from his bed-room in his Dhanmundi House at Dacca. He had been in the town for the last few days and his election tour was being finalised. A couple of hundred miles from the city Kamal was going by a rickshaw. Since the elections were on, he could not restrain himself and asked the rickshaw-puller his opinion about the elections and about Mujib in particular. Promptly came the reply: 'Why, the Bangabandhu has already won, and he has become the President of our country. He richly deserved that'. The poor rickshaw-puller did not know the intricacies and the procedures that one has to follow in Pakistan to get elected and then to be denied a seat even in the Assemblies, what to talk of the government. But the poor rickshaw-puller was not bothered about it. For him the man who gave him a new lease of life, showed him the noble path of love, brotherhood and instilled in him the sense of nationalism was for all practical purposes his President. For him it was 'hell with Yahya Khan and hail Mujibur Rehman, the President'. That was Mr. Kamal's experience but this could be anyone's experience. Mujib is universally popular.

From commonest of common man in Bangla Desh to Presidents and Prime Ministers of independent countries in the wide world Sheikh Mujibur Rehman is a name that sends a thrill in the whole system. The Governments of USA, Nepal and Ceylon may still be regarding the affairs of Bangla Desh as internal matter for Pakistan but a large number of their top leaders have expressed their concern for Mujib's safety.

Mujib! What is he? 'A leaf in a storm' as A. K. Brohi is reported to have said in a despatch from a special correspondent in *Hindusthan Standard*. Brohi

maintains that Mujib was only a leaf in a storm tossed about by forces within his Awami League. That Mujib is just toeing the line of the extremists and Naxalites is apparent to Brohi and the people like him. But if we concede, for argument's sake, that it is so, what is the harm in following the majority opinion in one's own party? Yahya Khan may be following the tough line of his extremist colleagues—the hawks—but that has become his own policy. One cannot be divorced from the others unless Yahya or Mujib repudiate the policy and propound a different one. It may be that Mujib was not in favour of declaration of independence and some one else had unfurled the Bangla Desh flag before the army crack-down but that does not alter the situation. It does not condone the atrocities perpetrated by Yahya's military hawks in East Bengal. In any case, the split was complete and it is only a question of time when the final snapping of the links with West Pakistan occurs.

That Mujib is a terrific leader when out of jail—none knows his exact jail-abode now, not even President Yahya Khan as he says—is conceded by Yahya Khan himself. The *Le Figaro* interview reports the President as saying that 'the Awami League leader was perhaps a great speaker but lacked the stuff of a leader. He was very brilliant and sure of himself in public. But in front of me he was but a cat'.

One thing the Dictator conceded was that Mujib is a great speaker and sure of himself in public and politics. What else a great leader is expected to be? In private, in serious company, talking to the President of Pakistan, when the fate of the whole country hanged in a balance, did the President expect Mujib to be boisterous, arrogant and light-hearted? The President of Pakistan could be so callous and light-hearted playboy as to ignore the misery, the sufferings and the

affliction of the people even in a terrible cyclone. I have elsewhere made a mention of the day Yahya Khan was supposed to have gone on an aerial tour of the cyclone-affected areas in East Bengal. He was back from what his press sycophants termed "a really successful visit" to China. He was in Dacca just before the elections and the disturbing situation in the countryside prompted the Governor, Vice-Admiral Ahsan* to persuade the President to take a tour of the area. The popularly elected 'future Prime Minister of Pakistan' was going about the affected places in waist deep water and giving relief to his people whereas the President—installed by virtue of the quiet coup—went on an aerial survey. He did not have the time or the inclination to look at the misery of his Bengali subjects—a class of second or third rate citizens—and more so after a grand and lavish reception in China. He agreed to go on that tour which took him over some of the worst affected areas. Gen. Yahya Khan was reported to have kept on drinking and he was not in a fit state to see others suffering from the devastation of cyclone. In fact he was oblivious of the suffering of the others, he was either taking Chinese opium and forgetting the happenings on this earth or enjoying himself on choicest foreign liquor.

Mujib is diametrically opposite of this spectacle. He spent his time in the villages and with workers of the Awami League directing relief and sending his colleagues to help those who needed it most.

Mujib is a considerate and thoughtful leader and behaves with an admirable sense of dedication to the cause. His feelings for his less fortunate brethren, when a child, have been mentioned earlier in this book.

*Ahsan is now awaiting court martial for being 'soft to Bengalis'.

This is another story of his later days when he had attained a certain position of fame and popularity which starts turning people's head from the real work and service. It did nothing of that sort to Mujib.

This story was related to me by Amjadul Haq, the Press Attache of free Bangla Desh Mission in New Delhi. Huq was then with Dacca Radio as in-charge of the programmes. Mujib was then Minister of Commerce and Industries in Aaur Rehman's ministry—the short-lived one. Huq had gone to get an interview recorded. He was talking with the leader about the interview when suddenly Mujib spotted some one trying to enter the room but hesitating all the time. Mujib instantly recognised the simple man an old colleague, a Hindu. He signalled him to come near and sit with him on the same cot. Huq and his colleague from the radio discreetly went to an adjoining room but everything was audible from this 'hide out', as Huq told me. He could hear the old man's tale of despair. His elder daughter was of marriagable age. A young man was fixed but he demanded a dowry of Rs. ten thousand, and it was impossible for the old man to arrange it. The boy was only a matriculate and the girl a University graduate. That also angered Mujib. He said something like 'That brat is only a matriculate and our daughter is a graduate. He has the cheek to ask for ten thousand! O.K., Leave it to me. Ask the boy to come and see me and you go ahead with the preparations for marriage'. He repeated in his stentorian voice: 'Send the boy to me'.

As silence reigned in the room for a couple of minutes, Huq craned his neck to see what was going on there. He saw Mujib digging into the pillow-case and taking out a few currency notes—maybe nine or ten of hundred rupees each—and handing over all to the old man. Mujib said: 'I do not have more at the moment.

I shall do something later, you go and arrange for the marriage. And don't forget to send the boy to me', the Sheikh reminded his old comrade. He gave enough time to the old man to gather the money and tuck it safely into his *dhoti* and as he left Mujib called Huq and his colleague. For some time that they were together Mujib never mentioned anything about the matter he had just handled in a highly professional and satisfactory manner. Mujib knew that if nothing was done for the old man and his daughter either she will commit suicide out of sheer disgust or may think of marrying some Muslim boy against her conscience and faith because of the circumstances. Mujib was not a man of that sort to let someone take an undue advantage of a person's circumstances. He took a personal interest in that matter for he is neither a fanatic Muslim nor an unpractical one.

Mujib's secularism was proved time and again. He had all along maintained that 'in East Bengal there is no Hindu, no Muslim and none from the other communities. They are all Bengalis and of course Pakistanis'. He had very good friends among the Hindus and there is no denying the fact that in the elections the Hindus, Christians and the Buddhists extended overwhelming support to Mujib and the Awami League. But to say that Mujib won because of the support of Hindus, and the Muslims never voted for him, is a blatant lie. The number of seats and the percentage of votes that he secured in the elections falsifies the allegation. In any case Mujib never took it to be a matter of shame to get Hindu votes. The Awami League could not have been so successful merely because of Hindu votes which in any case were only 15 to 20 per cent of the entire population. That they voted for him in overwhelming numbers is of course true but what of it ! They were as good citizens in the eyes of Mujib as any one of the

other communities. For Mujib there was no distinction between Hindus and Muslims. A good Hindu was as good as a good Muslim and a bad one similarly as bad as any bad Muslim.

This aspect of Mujibur Rehman has been referred to by many, it was evident during the 1964 riots in Dacca that had turned the city into a den of the worst type of communalism. Fanatic Muslims were after the blood of Hindus. But there were several Muslims all the same who gave their lives in trying to save Hindus. Many did succeed but many could not and in the effort to do so they too were killed. Leaders like Mujib did not differentiate between the communities. At one place a group of Hindus was surrounded by a frenzied mob of Muslims. A Muslim named Mohammad Shiraz,* a young man of 20-21, sheltered a big group of about 150 Hindus at Jaikali Temple Road and with just one gun was busy in defending them. By nightfall his ammunition was finished and the mob planned to return at night to avenge this act. But before they could come back, a prominent Muslim leader came to Shiraz and handed over 50 rounds of ammunition to him. Said the newcomer: 'Buck up, son! Save these Hindu brethren at all costs. Bengal's honour is at stake'.

This Muslim leader who wanted Hindus to be saved at all costs against fanatic Muslims was none other than Sheikh Mujibur Rehman. For him human lives were important, be they Hindu or Muslim. I am sure, had it been a mob of Hindus against whom he had to save the frightened Muslims he would have acted exactly in the same manner and none would have blamed him.

Mujib and his band of dedicated Awami League leaders are all educated and an enlightened lot believ-

*Shakuntal Sen, Compass Publications, Calcutta. *Dharmayug*, May 9, 1971.

ing firmly in secularism and the basic brotherhood of man. They are just not bothered about the misleading slogan of 'Islam in danger.'

Mujib is himself a tolerant and personally religious man but, as I have commented elsewhere, he is not a man who encourages blending of religion and politics. His religion is for the individual and for the good of society. But to call him irreligious or infidel is a lie. But Mujib's opponent, Maulana Maudoodi, the leader of the fanatic Jamaat-e-Islami, has never spared an occasion to malign and call him a 'Kafir'. But that has not deterred Mujib and he has gone from strength to strength in spite of the fanatics calling him all sorts of things. One of the reasons is that the people in East Bengal are more enlightened and are not easily roped in by these misleading tactics of communalists.

Sheikh Mujibur Rehman is secular to the core and no amount of narrow nationalism could ever overwhelm him. On Kashmir he had all the time maintained that the dispute could be solved according to the resolutions of the UN. Kashmir, he thinks, does not need a military solution. He gave an appropriate answer to Ayub also when someone referred to the demand for a plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir. Retorted Mujib : 'Yes, let Ayub order one in East Bengal and see the fun'. Mujib is a practical politician and, maybe, had he been the Prime Minister of Pakistan things would have been seen in different perspective and both the countries would have benefited. Why can't we have as excellent relations as there are between Canada and the United States ! People cross the borders of the two countries as one goes from Delhi to New Delhi or crosses the Howrah Bridge. That would have brought about a world of difference and the common man would have been the most benefited. The vested interests and the big powers might have been alarmed and panicked for

it is in their interest to keep the two countries divided, in perpetual conflict and at daggers drawn. That's why two Vietnams, two Koreas and two Germanys have to remain inimical. Flesh of one flesh, blood of one blood but poles apart in thinking. Mujib wanted to change the entire thinking.

Maulana Maudoodi and his fanatic followers had branded Mujib as anti-Islam and they shouted themselves hoarse to convince the people in East Bengal that Mujib's victory was the defeat of the whole Pakistani people. Facts have proved the communalists wrong and Mujib has emerged as the man who gave Bengal nationalism, new hope and freedom though his own freedom is in danger. But that does not matter for Mujib, the 'voice of Bangla Desh' which cannot be suppressed.

Mujib was hailed even fifteen years back as 'a man of strong determination, fiery patriotism and solid commonsense'.* These are the qualities that made him the hero of a suppressed people who saw in him their only ray of hope.

An evidence of popular esteem he is held in was witnessed when he was released from prison following the withdrawal of the infamous 'Agartala Conspiracy Case'. It is said a crowd of over a million joined to welcome him back. Such a massive show of love and respect for any popular leader was never witnessed anywhere in Pakistan.

Sheikh Mujibur Rehman has been a middle-of-the-road man. He is far away from extremes and has never given himself to excesses of any kind. After a meeting addressed by him in Dacca in the midst of the uncertainty early in March, a part of his enraged audience caught hold of the handful of West Pakistani soldiers in

*C.C. Desai, former High Commissioner in Pakistan.

a military jeep. They were about to be manhandled and maybe even lynched but Bangabandhu was quick in reaching at the spot. He shouted at his supporters to let go the soldiers. They were let off but before speeding away they were told that their duty was to protect the citizens of the country and defend the frontiers. The soldiers must have understood the leader but probably fear of a court martial inhibits them to give their best for their country—many have refused to fire at the people. What they heard that day from Mujib himself cannot be easily forgotten.

Sheikh Mujib has always been reluctant to hold office as minister. He does not feel at home when he is away from the people and near the seat of power. Had he the inclination to be someone at the government secretariat he would have been the Prime Minister even before the elections. There was a feeler from Yahya Khan regarding that but Mujib, as a people's leader, did not want to establish the people's rule through methods other than democratic.

Mujib served as a minister for two terms, one of seven months and the other of just two. Sheikh Abu Nasser, brother of Sheikh Mujib, said in an interview the other day in Delhi that Mujib had resigned minister-ship to devote time to party and organisational work. Of course, he never wanted to secede or wage a war against Pakistan. 'This is just absurd', asserted his brother.

Sheikh Abu Nasser also said that Mujib could have gone in hiding but when requested to do so, he thundered: 'How can I do it when my people are exposed to all sorts of dangers'. He was reminded that even Subhas Babu escaped so that he could organise an armed revolt against the British. 'My case is different', said Mujib; 'Here the struggle has already started and it will not be proper for me to leave my people and run away'.

Sheikh Nasser related a story how the West Pakistani's offered him a big chunk of business in West Pakistan in return for pleading with Mujib that he should give up his six points and accept Yahya Khan's four-point scheme. Nasser told the intermediary : 'You don't understand my brother. He will sacrifice his life but not his principles'.

Abu Nasser also told of his experience that showed how much Sheikh Mujib is worshipped even by Hindus in East Bengal. He crossed into India on July 19 after a week of travel on horseback, on foot, by cart and by boat. The last stretch was by boat and the boatman, a Hindu, asked him who he was. He replied that he was simply a refugee. But at night when he stayed under the boatman's shelter, his resemblance to Mujib gave him away. He had to admit that he was a brother of Mujib. 'The boatman rowed me 40 miles and would not take any money. When pressed to do so, he refused, saying that serving Sheikh Sahib's brother was ample reward', Abu Nasser said. What more a simple man could do to show how much respect he had for the Sheikh !

Some people say that Sheikh Mujibur Rehman 'is a leaf in the storm', and that we must forget him, etc. But the fact that even in his absence he is being virtually worshipped and his name gives strength to the struggle of independence is enough to know the extent he is respected. A businessman from Bangla Desh, now a pauper, said that Muslims and Hindus regard the Sheikh as some kind of Messiah, a *devata*. People have his pictures in their boxes. Every morning they take out his photo, salute it, bow before it, burn incense, offer flowers and then carefully put it back in the box.

'The military rulers may force the people to hoist Pakistani flag atop their houses but it is only the Bangla Desh flag and the memory of Mujib that is permanently

planted in their hearts', I was told. Such a man cannot die ; even if lunatic militarymen of Pakistan want to take revenge on Mujib he will not die. Leaders like him never die ; they are immortal. As Indira Gandhi said in Parliament the other day : 'I do not agree with the member that freedom movement in Bangla Desh would die down if the Sheikh was executed by the West Pakistani military regime. We all know that martyrdom gives immortality'. The service that Mujib has rendered and the courage that he has shown against heavy odds is exemplary and will remain fresh. His dedicated life is a message for the oppressed people all over the world and I was pleasantly surprised the other day to see that unlike the Arabs, entrenched in the governments and otherwise, the Palestine Liberation Front had come out in complete support to Mujib and his movement. It is because of the personality of Mujib who gave the movement a wider perspective for freedom and democracy that it is difficult not to be swayed by the righteousness of the cause. And this cause is going to triumph !

20

The Political Solution

THE problem of the political solution of Bangla Desh is being talked about. Not the solution itself, but the need for arriving at one is the subject-matter of many talks at many levels in the world capitals. But there have emerged no concrete proposals for the political solution and the way to bring it about. Different people have expressed different ideas about it but the most appropriate sounding was the one that Defence Minister Jagjiwan Ram plainly spoke of. It may not be simple or easy to achieve but the fact is that at least one cabinet minister in India had the guts to say clearly that the only political solution in Bangla Desh is that power should be transferred to Awami League and Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, all Pakistani troops should be withdrawn from Bangla Desh and all the detainees and prisoners should be freed.

In other words, Bangla Desh should be recognised as a sovereign independent state where no Pakistani troops, no Yahya Khan and Tikka Khan could remain to breathe out venom in the free air of Bangla Desh.

That also means that it should be a negotiated settlement. The Mukti Bahini will not have to fight and make sacrifices to drive out the aggressors. But the President of Pakistan who boasts that Pakistan is now stronger and proud makes the chances of a negotiated settlement remote.

Why should Pakistan negotiate for vacating Bangla Desh? If any time Yahya Khan decides to quit and leave Bangla Desh to the Bengalis, it will be either

because of heavy pressure from big powers or much more intensification of the activities of Bangla Desh Mukti Bahini. The first does not seem a possibility but the second is certainly being stepped up and the Pakistanis are feeling the pinch.

What is the political settlement the Awami League has in mind ? It was clarified by Syed Nazrul Islam the Acting President of Bangla Desh. He said it could be based on four points—formerly it was six-point programme, but now only four will do.* The first point demands the release of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, the President of Bangla Desh Republic. The second one asks for the withdrawal of all Pakistani troops from the soil of Sonar Bangla Desh and the third wants that the Sovereign Republic of Bangla Desh should be recognised by Pakistan. Lastly, Pakistan must give compensation for the damage done to Bangla Desh and for those hundreds and thousands killed or wounded in unprecedented military action.

That should be very clear to Pakistan and nothing more, nothing less for acceptance as the basis of a political solution.

That also makes it clear that a solution within the framework of Pakistan is just not acceptable to Bangla Desh leaders. It could be either a complete withdrawal of Pakistan from Bangla Desh or the war of liberation will continue. The Prime Minister of Bangla Desh, Tajuddin Ahmad, made it very clear. He said : 'We have to depend on ourselves for our liberation. No one else can do what is to be done by us. We shall do it'. This statement came after the crucial talks between the Bangla Desh leaders and Durga Prasad Dhar, who is the special man in the foreign ministry. He is really the Key

*Awami League also says that only one-point programme will do—complete independence.

Man in the Government of India after the Prime Minister. Dhar went to Mujib Nagar and met the Bangla Desh leaders. This happened after the Indo-USSR treaty of peace, friendship and co-operation had been signed. Tajuddin's statement should be seen in the light of talks they had with Dhar. The statement confirmed the fears of a section of people who were saying all along, that the Soviet Union has, by this treaty, stopped our progress towards the ultimate solution and recognition by India. India's stand at first was that the freedom fighters should be given all support and that there would be a solution according to which the refugees would go back in six months. These were the sentiments expressed by the Prime Minister also. As a matter of fact it was Indira Gandhi who set the six-month time-limit. At the time when she first said about the refugees going back in six months* there were only two opinions : either she is just bluffing or she has chalked out a definite plan to help free Bangla Desh. No one was so naive as to believe that the refugees will go back without a proper solution which ensures their freedom and safety. That has not come so far and the Prime Minister has from August end started saying that the refugees could only be sent when there are normal conditions and the safety of them all could be ensured. This was the situation three months ago and two months ago but tall talks were also there

So far India is concerned the only political future acceptable to it could be a free sovereign government of Bangla Desh, a democratic and secular government. However you may shout that Pakistan wants to make it an Indo-Pakistan issue whereas in reality it is an issue between Bangla Desh and Pakistan, the fact is that India itself is vitally involved in and concerned

*Now she asks who suggested this six-month period ?

with Bangla Desh. We just should not tolerate genocide being committed in our neighbourhood. We cannot be silent spectators—in the real sense of the term—to what is going on inside Bangla Desh. It is of vital significance to us ; if for nothing else, then for the huge influx of over eight million refugees in India. The Government of India has not been able to take a firm stand and the mass influx of refugees and the repercussion it has on our economy, social and cultural life and on the law and order problems, not to talk of security headache, are tremendous. The Prime Minister downward everybody goes on saying that we are holding these refugees as trust for the international community and that it is only on humanitarian grounds that we have allowed these people into our territory, but the fact is what could you have done otherwise? You just cannot push them back—most of these people are Hindus—who have been mercilessly driven out of their homeland by a bloodthirsty and fanatic military regime to shatter our economy. Nowhere in the world exodus on such a mass scale in such a short time has taken place. But the only thing that the Government of India says is that this is the responsibility of world community. It is the primary responsibility of Pakistan, the signatory to all the Geneva and other conventions on Human Rights, etc. If Pakistan butchers its people, it is, in a technical sense and for argument's sake, Pakistan's own business. But the moment any one of its people cross into any other neighbouring country the internal affair argument ceases and the neighbour has every right to take action to put a stop to whatever nonsense goes on in its vicinity. This simple argument and commonsense should have been applied to deal with the situation. Why should Pakistan go on merrily indulging in whatever it likes to do and the refugees become the

concern of world community ? It should be open for India to take whatever action is proper to ensure : one, safety of Indian territory, two, stability within its borders ; three, preservation of its own social, political, economic and cultural structure. That Pakistan has threatened all these by its own thoughtless acts should be enough for India to act and act decisively.

It will perhaps not be out of place to recall what the President of United States of America did when a strategic installation was sought to be established so near its borders. I am referring to the Russian missiles, the sites for which were in Cuba. America let it be known that it would not tolerate such a move which threatened its own security and said it in clear terms to let the others know that US government meant business. That worked and worked quickly.

I expected India to follow the same policy for purely defensive purposes. We are not threatening anybody but if we are threatened in several ways we shall not tolerate that state of affairs. Let this be made clear to everybody, big or small.

During the early phase of the Bangla Desh struggle, it looked as if India is contemplating that very sound policy and rumours circulating in political circles said that India was going to demand a piece of East Pakistan territory if the influx of refugees continued. We are certainly responsible for feeding and looking after the refugees from across the borders. We can do it and we shall do it—the feeding and sheltering—but only to help Bangla Desh, not to help Pakistan. This should have been made amply clear and with the earnestness and seriousness that it deserves.

Instead, what happened was a spate of statements and declarations that we will not use force against anybody to get the wrong thing set right. This is a big folly to let our enemy know that our intentions are

absolutely harmless and it can go on indulging in anything it likes. After all, the longer you go on making such statements the longer will you have to restrain yourself and a time will come when you will be caught in the web of your own utterances and it will be difficult to get out of them.

This thing has happened when the late Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru went on assuring the world that India will not take to use of force to settle its dispute with Portugal over Goa. The whole world knew that India's case on Goa was two hundred per cent correct and that Goa should form India's part instead of Portugal's, situated thousands of miles away. But by saying day in and day out that we would not use force India, encouraged Portugal to do anything to Goa and Goanese people. The situation continued for 14 years till a V.K. Krishna Menon had to successfully and literally force Nehru to adopt the correct way to liberate Goa. Nehru had to cut a sorry figure and eat his own words. A sovereign state keeps its options open and uses them when it suits the country most. In this case Indian Government has in a way put all the cards on the table for its adversary to see and when we do not have any hidden card we appeal to world community for help. A better way should have been to give an ultimatum to Pakistan and a clear indication to world community that things were going out of hand and our patience was running out. We should know how to defend our interests and not depend on others. If we are determined to ensure our safety and serve our own interests Pakistan is no match for India. Only the brave deserve the fair and we should not hope to evoke interest of the world community by sending our envoys to various countries. It looks as if we are only pleading with them to intervene on our behalf. Had we taken a firm stand and firmer action the world community

would have hurried to plead with us and would have seen to it that Pakistan behaved.

I am not writing all this only from India's point of view. It is a coincidence that our interests and those of Bangla Desh are common to a very large extent. The weakening of Pakistan will also help Bangla Desh, democracy, and secularism.

Talking about secularism I recall the historic function held in a South Delhi suburb, Anand Niketan, where for the first time in Delhi the green, red and gold flag of Sovereign People's Republic of Bangla Desh was unfurled by K.M. Shehabuddin. Shehabuddin led the mass defection of Pakistani diplomats all over the world when he and Amjadul Huq walked out of Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi on April 7, 1971. That started the chain-reaction and dozens of Pakistani Bengalis became free and joined the forces of liberation.

The point I was trying to make was that hitherto Pakistan has been a theocratic and pseudo-Islamic country which takes delight in persecuting its own citizens. But the time has come when the majority of Pakistan broke away from the worst kind of slavery and hoisted a flag which proclaimed secularism. The function at the New Delhi mission of Bangla Desh was marked by recitations from Quran, Gita, Bible and Tripitak. East Bangal has people of all faiths—Muslims, Hindus, Christians and Buddhists. It gave equal respect for every one and the occasion called for blessings from all the great religious books. Abdul Majid recited from the Quran, P. Mukherji from the Gita and Bhikku Dharmavir recited from Tripitak. The veteran journalist Trevor Drieberg read from the Bible. That is a political ideal which Awami League wanted to create, that is the state Mujib wanted to establish and that is the set-up India wishes to see in Bangla Desh,

in Pakistan and elsewhere. But the steps that we have to take in order to achieve that should be effective, swift and decisive. That has not been done so far.

A political solution is contemplated by Yahya Khan in which most of the Awami League members are disqualified to participate in political life. Some of his henchmen getting elected—how, I do not know—and some of the puppets—whom he is unable to spot—taking over administration in the name of democracy and civil administration. Right from the day most of the Awami League MNAs were disqualified—they were later classified as ‘rebels’—Gen. Yahya Khan has been desperately trying to find some puppets who could run the administration and keep the facade of a democratic civil administration. But Yahya Khan forgot that it was Bangla Desh and not West Pakistan and the times of Mohammed Ali Bogra and others had ended long ago. It is the age of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rehman who has taught a different lesson to his people and who in their turn could teach a lesson or two in integrity and loyalty to a cause to people like Yahya Khan. It is a matter of pride for the freedom fighters that after so many months of military rule and ruthless suppression neither the civil administration is working anywhere near normalcy nor the industrial and business life has come to normal. It is a great tribute to the people of Bangla Desh who have successfully resisted all the pressures of Yahya Khan so much so that Yahya Khan had to pin down the hawkiest of the hawks Lt. Gen. Tikka Khan and shunt him out apparently for not being able to ‘deliver the goods’. Such a degree of loyalty and adherence to a cause is difficult to achieve anywhere.

I have already pointed out that free Government of Bangla Desh is going to be something totally different from what we have been accustomed to see in Pakistan

all these years. Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmad said the other day that the People's Republic of Bangla Desh would always support the national liberation struggle of different Afro-Asian nations against colonialism and imperialism. He said, 'We believe the freedom-loving people of the world can together check the evil design of the imperialists to destroy their independence and sovereignty'.

Tajuddin Ahmad expressed confidence that the liberation of Bangla Desh is only a matter of time, the fight aims at complete national independence. The Prime Minister of Bangla Desh said that he and his party have always consistently favoured an independent foreign policy and are opposed to all kinds of military pacts. 'Our policy is one of friendship for all, malice for none. We have particularly outlined our desire for good relations with our neighbours, irrespective of political or ideological differences. We have expressed in this connection our desire for friendly relations with India,' he said.

I have no doubt in any mind that whenever Bangla Desh comes into being fully, it is going to be a socialist, secular, progressive, democratic and non-aligned state. All these ideals are foreign to Pakistan and the fact that free Bangla Desh will adopt all of them is enough to conclude what a strange partnership existed between Pakistan and East Bengal. It was incompatible right from the beginning and no amount of harping on Islam could bring about cohesion between the two wings. The gap was too large to be bridged and the split was inevitable. Parting of ways was unavoidable and if it could have been accomplished without bloodshed and bitterness it would have helped Pakistan's existence even without Bangla Desh. But now the existence of West Pakistan will not be easy. It is already a parasite of some foreign powers and when

East Bengal is completely free the West will feel the bitter pinch at every step.

Already it is being commented upon in Pakistani newspapers that the whole existence of so many years has gone waste. Unlike in the past, many of the newspapers in their Independence Day specials reflected a feeling of gloom and despondency about the future of Pakistan. There was no jubilation and expression of hope for a bright future.

Morning News of Karachi published an editorial entitled 'Facing Facts' which said that it was because of Pakistan's emotionalism, hypocrisy and pretensions that this country now found itself propelled to the brink of disaster. Nations are not organised and revitalised by bluff and buffoonery. Statecraft was much more serious business though unfortunately in Pakistan it was treated as 'mumbo-jumbo'.

Another newspaper said that the 25th year of Pakistan's independence was being observed in a mood of uncertainty and despondency. 'We are today a people groping in the dark, we are crawling in a blind alley, or have worked our way to a dead end', the paper wrote.

The Leader of Karachi added that Pakistan was finding itself immobilized and dazed not only in political and constitutional fields but also in the economic, social, cultural and religious fields. And that made the stalemate pervasive and the stagnation complete, the paper added.

This immobilisation in cultural and social fields is really there can now be noted even by a single instance. East Bengal's queen of the movies, Kaberi Choudhury, has crossed into India after being driven away by circumstances which were terribly upsetting, to put it mildly. She has lost everything and somehow was able to enter India. So far it is all right but the authorities

in Pakistan have banned the showing of her films throughout the country, both West Pakistan and East Bengal. Now it is not the loss of Kaberi Choudhuri, Bangla Desh and India but of the people of Pakistan and the exhibitors, distributors and others. Kaberi had worked in a number of films and there would hardly be a picture house in East Bengal where movies starring Kaberi Choudhuri were not shown. And now the movie moghuls of Pakistan are cursing their lot and Yahya Khan's action which is spelling their ruin. Earlier the intellectuals were the worst casualty, and now the film artistes have also to leave Pakistan. The cultural vacuum thus created would be tragic. The cultural rejuvenation is not an easy thing and Pakistan will surely realise this aspect and repent it but then it will be too late.

This state of affairs will end only if there is a political solution and thereby Pakistani forces leave East Bengal. If Yahya Khan and his henchmen ultimately, did decide to quit East Bengal, things could be a little bright for Pakistan because of normal conditions being established. The alternative before Pakistan is peaceful, negotiated political settlement or a complete and crushing defeat by progressive forces. No other solution will be acceptable to people in Bangla Desh and their truly elected representatives, under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, who has to be released in the first instance.

People's Party Chairman Zulfikar Ali Bhutto has now realised that Gen. Yahya Khan did not really want to hand over power to civilians and his promises were only hollow. But that is too late. He was thinking of becoming the Prime Minister of undivided Pakistan and now is worried about his future as an MP. He has warned Yahya that transfer of power should take place within two months. But Bhutto should at least now realise

that this was precisely the demand of Mujib to thwart which Bhutto had gone to absurd lengths and in the process lost all chances of his political survival. Now at best he can hope to be a minister in Yahya Khan's cabinet if such a thing could be formed but even that is improbable. In any case Bangla Desh and, for that matter India, are not bothered about Bhutto. Let him be the Prime Minister of truncated Pakistan who cares, so long as Bangla Desh is on the sure path of emerging as a free and democratic country. But this does not seem so easy because if nothing else Pakistan and its 'mighty General' Yahya Khan has taken the country to such absurd lengths and himself to such ridiculous limits that he may wind up in a lunatic asylum. The tone of the tyrant has changed, the manner become unlike that of a President and the arrogance gone beyond limits. The recent interview he gave to *Le Figaro*, the leading French newspaper, shows his desperation and totally unrealistic attitude to the problem of Bangla Desh, the personality of Mujib and the hate-India stand that become ridiculous day by day.

That any political solution of Bangla Desh problem will result in a significant dwarfing of what Pakistan was at the time of its birth is certain. It is coming and India will not in any way be responsible for that. Gen. Yahya Khan may like the prospects or not but that is a stark naked reality he has to face. The reasons of his haughtiness increasing at every interview he gives to foreign newspapers betrays his own weakness and exposes the hollowness of his stand.

By maligning India at every opportunity he is only exposing himself as a stupid President who is himself not sure of his ground. The *Le Figaro* interview where he said that 'if the Indians imagine that they can take a morsel of my territory without provoking a war.

they will commit a grave error', shows his nervousness. Where is the question of India provoking a war—though I am one of those who think Pakistan has to be taught a lesson which it remembers for a long time. India does not want a single inch of Pakistani territory; it is Pakistan which is in illegal occupation of India's territory in Kashmir and even has the treachery of giving a part of it to its new masters, the Chinese. India has to get back its territory although even for that there are no attempts by India because India does not want to create tension. But I am sure if Yahya undertakes the risk of waging war against India he will get a fitting reply and then probably a political solution of Bangla Desh problem would come about automatically. But India in its restraint and sober mood is not at all prepared to act and oblige Pakistan by declaring a war.

In any case if the war comes about—and the chances are that Pakistan is bent on precipitating things—India will have to see to it that everything ends satisfactorily. A solution of Bangla Desh involves cutting Pakistan to size and the sooner that comes the better it will be for the whole area.

Gen. Yahya Khan in that interview also betrays his breeding. The language he used and the phrases he uttered will do justice to a street urchin and a third rate man of the underworld. The fact is Pakistan's 'highly trained and professional army' under Yahya Khan is behaving just in that manner, and, how could the Commander-in-Chief be any better behaved than his barbarous hordes running amuck in Bangla Desh!

Le Figaro *editorially apologised at the language of the Pakistani dictator saying that on several occasions the Head of Pakistani Government has used a language the violence of which could hurt some of our readers.

*See *Times of India*, September 2, 1971.



***Sheikh Mujibur Rahman taking the Saluteat the
guard of honour in New Delhi***

Mrs. Indira Gahdhi with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman



Mujibur Rahman Zindabad! Indira Gandhi Zindabad!





The Bangabandhu with Indian leaders



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in New Delhi



We of course let him bear the entire responsibility of his comments'. But the tragedy is that by his delirious outbursts he is degrading the whole country and the people of Pakistan, with whom—as Indira Gandhi also said—we have absolutely no quarrel.

There is no doubt that Pakistan's military dictator and his henchmen are desperate, frustrated and on the verge of breaking down. There is no justification for things they are saying and doing these days. (That Pakistan is on the brink of collapse is also the opinion of the former British minister and sitting labour M.P. Peter Shore, whom I have quoted elsewhere also. He said after a visit to refugee camps and meetings with the leaders of free Bangla Desh Government that the crisis in Bangla Desh were the death throes of the old state of Pakistan and the birth pangs of a new nation of Bangla Desh.

That this matter was not in any way an Indo-Pakistan affair was also confirmed by Shore when he said that the crisis has nothing to do with the old Indo-Pakistan rivalries.

But probably Pakistan is not interested in any political solution of the problem. For one thing the political solution would also sound the death-knell of Pakistan itself for it could not prevent the people in West Pakistan from demanding their share of the solution and that will be the proper and fitting solution.

Epilogue

THE fate of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman hangs delicately in balance. With Yahya Khan and his clan out to take their revenge on the men who foiled their attempts to continue to loot East Bengal, fool the people and perpetuate the rule of military-bureacracy-industrialists in Pakistan, it is very difficult to make them see reason, make them give up easily and to hand over power to civilians in West Pakistan and give freedom to East Bengal. That will just not happen.

Reports are that the trial of Mujib has been postponed for three weeks, or three months. It also said that Mujib may be sentenced to death but the sentence will not be carried out; a 'reasonable' Yahya Khan will, on compassionate grounds, commute the sentence of death to one of life imprisonment.

That is adding insult to injury and that will not save Pakistan or its dictator from the wrath of the people all over the world.

It was reported that new procedure has been evolved for Mujib's trial. A brand new regulation under the Martial Law to enable the bloodthirsty militarists of Pakistan to shorten the procedure and carry out their sinister designs about Mujib has been invented. According to the new set of regulations it will not be necessary to have the defence counsel. The court will only record a memorandum of evidence and it can disallow any evidence which, in its opinion, is vexatious or will make for delays or will otherwise 'defeat' the ends of justice'.

How ridiculous the phrase 'defeat the ends of justice'

is ! What justice can be expected from Yahya and his company ? The only thing that would have served the cause of justice was immediate release of Mujib, handing over power to him and voluntary retirement and exile of all the top dozen Generals of the armed forces. But that will not come on its own. The world is still not prepared to go all out to help the cause that is right. It is left to the two parties to do something urgently in the matter—Government of India and Bangla Desh. And another very important party are the people in West Pakistan who have to rise in revolt one day. The sooner they do it the better it will be in the interest of democracy, freedom and secularism.

That there are signs of rumblings could be felt even in Delhi and elsewhere. The tragedy of Bangla Desh is no doubt bigger than three of the biggest earthquakes ever occurred on the earth. But the revolt that is brewing in West Pakistan is going to be the burst of the biggest volcano ever seen on the earth.

Indications are that this will happen soon. Internal dissensions in West Pakistan that have been going on for months, if not years, have started coming to surface. As Defence Minister Jagjiwan Ram has said, 'The revolution that Mujibur Rehman started in Bangla Desh is going to be copied in West Pakistan and the other good thing of this war of liberation would be that West Pakistan would also be liberated'. Freedom and liberty can and should be achieved at any price howsoever heavy that may be.

APPENDIXES

- I. *Mujib's Six-point Programme and Election Manifesto.*
- II. *'Agartala Conspiracy Case' : Mujib's Defence*
- III. *Mujib's Election Speech, Oct. 28, 1970*
- IV. *Mujib's Statement dated February 24, 1971*
- V. *Mujib's Speech on March 7, 1971*
- IV. *Gen. Yahya Khan's Broadcast, March 26, 1971*
- VII. *Seminar, 'Mujib's Trial: A Farce', New Delhi*

Appendix I

Six-point programme of the Awami League first set out in 1966 and on the basis of which elections were fought in December 1970

1. The character of the government shall be federal and parliamentary, in which the elections to the federal legislature of the federating units shall be direct and on the basis of universal adult franchise. The representation in our federal legislature shall be on the basis of population.

2. The federal government shall be responsible only for defence and foreign affairs and subject to the conditions provided in (3) below.

3. There shall be two separate currencies mutually or freely convertible in each wing for each region, or in the alternative a single currency, subject to the establishment of a federal reserve system in which there will be regional Federal Reserve Banks which shall devise measures to prevent the transfer of resources and flight of capital from one region to another.

4. Fiscal policy shall be the responsibility of the federating units. The federal government shall be provided with requisite revenue resources for meeting the requirements of defence and foreign affairs which would be automatically appropriable by the federal government in the manner provided, and on the basis of the ratio to be determined by the procedure laid down in the constitution. Such constitutional provisions would ensure that federal government's revenue requirements are not met consistently with the objective of ensuring control over fiscal policy of the governments of the federating units.

5. Constitutional provisions shall be made to enable separate accounts to be maintained of the foreign exchange earnings of each of the federating units, under the control of the respective governments of the federating units. The foreign exchange requirements of the federal government shall be met by the governments of the federating units on the basis of a ratio to be determined in accordance with the procedure laid down in the constitution. The regional government shall have power under the constitution to negotiate foreign trade and within the framework of the foreign policy of the country which shall be the responsibility of the federal government.

6. The governments of the federating units shall be empowered to maintain a militia or para-military force in order to contribute effectively towards national security.

Other Programmes

Agriculture: The Awami League stands for the abolition of Jagirdari, Zamindari and Sardari systems. The entire land system has to undergo a radical reorientation in the interest of the actual tillers of land. Ceiling must be imposed on landholdings. Agriculture must be modernised. The obstacles presented by the fragmentation and sub-division of the land holdings must be overcome. The Awami League suggests the formation of multipurpose co-operatives. Government should provide effective inducement by funelling through such co-operatives, vital inputs such as irrigation, embankment, drainage, deep tubewells, power pumps, fertilizers, improved seeds, agricultural implements and machinery, credit and increased use of modern techniques.

Education: In the field of education, Awami League advocates free and compulsory education to all the children over 5 years; making readily accessible secondary education to all sections of the people; and

establishment of new universities including medical and technical universities. The party stands for committing at least 4 per cent of the Gross National Product to education, and for substantial increase in salaries of college and school teachers. Immediate steps are also envisaged to ensure that Bengali and Urdu should replace English.

Islamic Laws : Awami League affirms its commitment to the constitutional principle that no law should be enacted or imposed in Pakistan which is repugnant to the injunction of Islam as contained in the *Holy Quran* and *Sunnah*.

Nationalisation : The party stands for a radical change in the country's economic structure, including the nationalisation of banking and insurance.

End of Cartels and Monopolies : Protected markets, tax holidays, huge subsidies in the form of bonus vouchers, credits and grants of foreign exchange at the artificially-low official rate have created specially favourable conditions for the growth of monopolies and cartels. The Awami League stands for the abolition of such monopolies and cartels. The private sector in its own sphere, however, must make their full contribution to the economy.

Foreign Policy : In the field of foreign affairs, the Awami League stands for withdrawing Pakistan from SEATO, CENTO and all other military pacts to avoid involvement in global conflicts and pursue a truly independent non-aligned foreign policy. The League supports the struggle of the oppressed people of the world against imperialism, colonialism and apartheid.

Federal Services : The Party's Federal Scheme envisages the abolition of all Pakistan services and its replacement by Federal services in which persons shall be recruited on the basis of population for all parts of Pakistan.

Appendix II

'Agartala Case' : Mujib's Defence

During the course of his trial in the 'Agartala Conspiracy Case', Sheikh Mujibur Rehman told a special tribunal trying him in Dacca in February 1969 that he had been "falsely implicated" in the conspiracy trial "only to torture me, disgrace and defame me and my party and to suppress the legitimate demands of East Pakistan".

"Ever since my school days, I had ceaselessly worked for the achievement of Pakistan and was a very active member of the Muslim League organisation in pre-Independence India and Bengal and worked for the realisation of Pakistan even at the cost of my studies.

"After Independence, we organised the Awami League in 1949 under the leadership of late Mr. H. S. Suhrawardy after the Muslim League had betrayed the aspirations of the people of Pakistan. The Awami League was and is a constitutional democratic organisation.

"In 1954, I was elected a member of the Provincial Assembly and was later elected a member of the National Parliament. Twice I became Minister in the Government of East Pakistan. I also led the Parliamentary delegation to the People's Republic of China. For organising a constitutional opposition party for the welfare of the masses I had already suffered a few years in jail by this time.

"After the imposition of Martial Law, the present regime started oppressing me. They arrested me on Oct. 12, 1958 under the East Pakistan Public Safety Ordinance and kept me detained without trial for about:

a year and a half. While I was thus detained, they started half a dozen criminal cases against me, but I was honourably acquitted in all of them. I was released from detention in December 1959.

"At the time of my release, I was served with orders of restriction, *i.e.*, if I were to leave Dacca I was to inform the Special Branch in writing with the particulars of the places I was to visit and on return to Dacca I was required to inform the Special Branch of my return in writing. I was always shadowed by the intelligence people.

"Then again when my leader, the late Mr. Suhrawardy, was arrested in 1962 on the eve of the promulgation of the present constitution, I was also put behind bars under the Public Safety Ordinance and detained without trial for about six months.

"After the death of Mr. Suhrawardy, the Awami League was revived in January 1965 in both the wings of Pakistan as a political party and we decided to fight the presidential election as component of the combined Opposition party, which nominated Miss Fatima Jinnah as the Opposition candidate for the Presidential post against the candidature of Mr. Ayub Khan and started election campaign. The regime again started oppressing and harassing me by starting a number of prosecutions.

"During the 1965 war with India, I was one of the political leaders who condemned the Indian aggression and asked my party and the people to lend full support to the Government's war efforts. My organisation, the East Pakistan Awami League, also issued circulars to all its units urging them to help the war effort in every possible way.

"During this war, at the all-party conference held at the East Pakistan Governor's House, I, along with other political leaders of this wing, issued a joint

statement condemning Indian aggression and asked the people to work unitedly and help the country's war effort. After the war, when President Ayub Khan visited East Pakistan I and all other political leaders met him on invitation, and I appealed to the President to give regional autonomy to East Pakistan and to make it self-sufficient in defence in the light of our experiences during the war when East Pakistan was completely disconnected from West Pakistan and the rest of the world.

"I also supported the Tashkent Declaration as my people and myself believe that all international disputes should be settled by peaceful means as we believe in world peace for progress.

"In early 1966, there was an all-party national meeting convention in Lahore, where I placed the six-point programme before the Subjects Committee of the then convention as the programme for the constitutional solution of East Pakistan's problems vis-a-vis those of West Pakistan. The six-point programme stipulates full regional autonomy both for East Pakistan and West Pakistan.

"Then my party, the East Pakistan Awami League, accepted the six-point programme and we started holding public meetings to mobilise public opinion in its favour so that economic and other disparities existing between the two wings might be removed.

"At this the Government machinery and the leaders of the Government party, including the President, threatened me with 'language of weapon' and civil war' and started harassing me by instituting more than a dozen cases against me. They arrested me first in April 1966 at Jessore, while I was returning to Dacca after holding a public meeting at Khulna *via* Jessore, where I was intercepted and arrested under a warrant of arrest issued from Dacca for an alleged prejudicial speech.

"I was produced before the sub-divisional magistrate, Jessore, who granted me interim bail. On reaching Dacca, I appeared before the sub-divisional officer, Dacca Sadar, who refused to grant me bail, but as I was granted bail by the Sessions Judge, Dacca, the same day I was released. I came to my home at about 7 p.m. At 8 p.m. that night the police came to my house again with a warrant of arrest from Sylhet for an alleged prejudicial speech there.

"I was arrested and taken to Sylhet under police escort that very night. Next morning my bail plea was rejected by the sub-divisional magistrate of Sylhet who sent me to jail. The following day, the Sessions Judge of Sylhet was kind enough to grant me bail. On my release, I was arrested at the jail gate by the police on a warrant of arrest from Mymensingh for an alleged prejudicial speech delivered by me there at a the public meeting. That very night I was escorted by police from Sylhet to Mymensingh. I was produced before the sub-divisional magistrate, Mymensingh, who similarly refused to grant me bail and sent me to Mymensingh jail. All these series of arrests and harassments took place in April 1966. The following day, the Sessions Judge of Mymensingh granted me bail and on release from jail, I came back to Dacca.

"It was in the first week of May, probably 8th of May, 1966, that I addressed a public meeting at Narayanganj and came to my Dacca residence at night. At one o'clock that night I was arrested by the police under Rule 32 of the Defence of Pakistan Rules. This was followed by the simultaneous arrests of a large number of my party leaders. My party called a general strike on June 7, 1966 to protest against our arrests. During this protest-strike throughout the province, 11 people were killed at Dacca and Narayanganj by police firing and about 800 workers were arrested

and a number of cases were started against countless others.

"Mr. Monem Khan, Governor of East Pakistan, told more or less openly to groups of officers and others that so long as he (Mr. Monem Khan) was there, 'Sheikh Mujibur Rehman would have to be in jail'. This is very widely known.

"Ever since my detention I was facing a number of trials in Dacca Central jail where the courts were being held. After about 21 months of detention, on Jan. 18, 1968, at one o'clock I was released from detention and from the jail gate some military personnel forcibly brought me to Dacca cantonment, where I was detained in a closed room. I was segregated and kept in solitary confinement and was not allowed to see anyone. I was not allowed to read newspapers. In fact, I was completely cut off from the rest of the world for five long months. During this period, I was subjected to inhuman mental torture and I was denied all physical amenities.

"On June 18, 1968 just one day before the present trial started, it was for the first time that I met Mr. Abdus Salam Khan, advocate, whom I engaged as one of my lawyers...

"I am President of the East Pakistan Awami League, a constitutional political party having a definite and constructive manifesto and programme for the economic, political and social uplift of the country. I wanted justice to both the wings of the country as envisaged by the six-point programme. What I think good for the country, I have always expressed openly within constitutional limits and still then I have been made to suffer by the ruling clique and vested interests who want to perpetuate their exploitation of the Pakistani masses, particularly East Pakistanis, by suppressing me and my party."

Appendix III

Text of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman's Radio Broadcast on 28th October, 1970*

My dear fellow citizens, brothers and sisters,
assalamo-alaikum :

I must begin by offering 'munajat' for those heroic martyrs, who shed their blood and laid down their lives for the cause of the people. It is their sacrifices and that of countless thousands who have defied tyranny, in movement after movement leading up to last year's historic mass upsurge that has carried the people's struggle forward. Indeed, even the fact that I am able to speak to you over the national radio and television network may be counted as one of the initial gains of the people's struggle, since uptill this time this privilege was monopolised by those in power.

Our struggle must go on. For the real goal lies ahead. Power has to be won by the people. The exploitation of man by man and of region by region must be brought to an end. The powerful coteries which have ruled Pakistan for 22 years will do everything possible to prevent transfer of power to the people. It is they who are actively conspiring to frustrate the holding of the general elections, and even after elections, they will continue to obstruct every effort to end exploitation. They have money, they have influence, they have the capacity to use force against the people. History, however, testifies that determined people can successfully resist and overcome such forces of oppression.

*Dawn, 29 Oct., 1970. Original in Bengali.

The most solemn pledge that Awami League can make to people of Pakistan is that it shall stand by their side and indeed lead them in resisting the forces of oppression and exploitation. No people have secured freedom and justice unless they have been geared to die for it. We, therefore, serve notice upon the forces of reaction in our society that we, along with the people of Pakistan, will confront them and if democratic processes are obstructed, we shall resist them by every means possible.

Awami League was born in adversity and has grown in adversity. Under our great leader, the late Hasan Shaheed Suhrawardy, we came into existence to defy the attempt of the ruling party to form a one-party State. We thus began struggle to establish democracy in Pakistan. This struggle continues till this day. Our Party has faced onslaught after onslaught from the ruling group. Our leadership and our workers have spent the better part of their lives in jails. We have faced and overcome every form of repression. It is this that gives us the courage and confidence today to commit ourselves to the task of confronting the anti-democratic forces.

To overcome the crisis that engulfs the nation, we must resolve those issues which are its cause. The first is the deprivation of political freedom. The second is the sense of economic injustice felt by the overwhelming multitudes of our people. The third is the deep sense of injustice created by widening economic disparity between the regions. It is this that underlies the anguish and the anger of the Bengali people. The same sentiment is reflected among the downtrodden people of the neglected areas of West Pakistan.

Our manifesto sets out a comprehensive strategy for resolving the fundamental issues. A real living democracy must be established, in which all the fundamental

freedom shall be constitutionally guaranteed. Our manifesto outlines a framework for the healthy growth of political parties, trade unions and local self-government. We do pledge to restore complete freedom of the press and academic freedom and to eradicate corruption which has grown like cancer in our society.

The present economic system, which has established an intolerable structure of injustice, must be radically altered.

Today, barely two dozen families have acquired control over 60 per cent of the nation's industrial assets, 80 per cent of its banking assets and 75 per cent of its insurance assets; 82 per cent of the total bank advances are concentrated in only 3 per cent of the total accounts. The tax structure in existence is one of the most regressive in the world. Only 2 per cent of the GNP is being realised as direct taxes as against 6 per cent in other developing countries, while oppressive indirect taxes have been imposed on such essential commodities as salt.

Protected markets, tax holidays, huge subsidies in the form of bonus vouchers, credits and grants of foreign exchange at the artificially-low official rate have created specially favourable conditions for the growth of monopolies and cartels.

Despite nominal land reforms, feudal lords have retained princely estates. They enjoy vast privileges and their prosperity increases while the lot of the poor peasants become more and more desperate. In a bid for survival, there is movement of people from the villages to the cities. According to official estimates 1/5th of the total labour force of about 90 lakh people are unemployed. This alarming figure continues to grow. The industrial workers are suffering the full impact of the sharp rise in the cost of living. The cost of living is increasing more rapidly than the increase in money wages.

The impact of the unending rise in the cost of living is also acutely felt by school and college teachers, low paid officers and employees. particularly the 4th grade employees of the Government.

To turn now to the appalling record of economic disparity it is seen that during the last 20 years, out of the total revenue expenditure of the Government only about Rs. 1,500 crores (that is, only one-fifth of the total) was spent in Bengal as against over Rs. 5,000 crores in West Pakistan. Of the total development expenditure during the same period Rs. 3,000 crores (that is, only one-third of the total) was spent in Bengal, as against over Rs. 6,000 crores in West Pakistan. Over 20 years, West Pakistan has imported goods worth more than Rs. 3,000 crores as against its own foreign exchange earnings of barely Rs. 1,300 crores. Imports into West Pakistan have been three times the value of the imports into Bengal.

It was made possible for West Pakistan to import goods worth Rs. 2,000 crores in excess of its export earning by allocating to it Rs. 500 crores of the foreign exchange earnings of Bengal and allowing it to utilise over 80 per cent of all foreign aid.

The record in the field of Government services is just as deplorable. After 21 years Bengalis account for barely 15 per cent in Central Government services and less than 10 per cent in the defence services.

The total economic impact of such discrimination has been that the economy of Bengal is today in a state of imminent collapse. Near famine conditions are prevailing in the majority of the villages. Some 15 lakh tons of rice has had to be imported only to save the people from starvation.

While inflation has been mounting those who are worse hit are the poor people of Bengal. The prices of essential commodities have been 25 to 50 per cent

higher in Bengal than in West Pakistan: the average price of wheat is Rs. 30 to 35 per maund in East Bengal as against Rs. 15 to 20 per maund in West Pakistan. Mustard oil sells in Bengal at Rs. 5 per seer as against Rs. 2.50 per seer in West Pakistan. The gold price is Rs. 135 to 140 per tola in Karachi as against Rs. 160 to 165 per tola in Dacca. Even a Customs barrier has been imposed against carrying gold from West Pakistan to Bengal.

This injustice is the product of the management of the economy for 22 years by the Central Government. The Central Government is incapable of redressing such injustices. This is borne out by the Fourth Five-Year Plan. The Fourth Plan allocations are a confession of the failure of Central Government, however powerful it might be, to redress past injustices.

The Awami League's six-point programme which is embodied in the 11-point programme presents a rational solution to this problem of regional injustice. With a Central bureaucracy in which Bengalis account for barely 15 per cent and with the nature of the power structure being what it is, to expect justice from a centralised system of economic management would be to expect the impossible. Attempts to secure larger allocations by political representatives of Bengal and the other under-developed areas would only aggravate regional tensions and threaten the viability of the Federal Government. The only feasible solution is the re-ordering of the constitutional structure by giving full regional autonomy to the federating units on the basis of our six-point formula. Such autonomy in order to be effective must include the power of managing the economy. This is why we insist upon federating units having control over monetary and fiscal policy and foreign exchange earnings and other powers to negotiate foreign trade and aid. By giving to the Federating units full control

over its economic destiny while entrusting to the Federal Government responsibility over foreign affairs and defence and, subject to certain safeguards, currency, we believe a just Federal balance will be attained.

Our Federal scheme envisages the abolition of all Pakistan services and its replacement by Federal services in which persons shall be recruited on the basis of population for all parts of Pakistan.

We also believe that the maintenance of a militia or a para-military force by the federating units will effectively contribute towards national security. This Federal scheme by removing the sources of doubt, distrust and discrimination will ensure a strong Pakistan.

This scheme will understandably be opposed by those in one region who would like to treat another region as a colony or a market. We believe, however, that this scheme will have the full support of the common people of Bengal and West Pakistan. Within this constitutional framework, we believe it will be possible to bring about a social revolution through the democratic process and to create a socialist economic order free from exploitation.

Rapid economic growth is an imperative necessity in order to meet the needs of our growing population. To achieve it, enormous effort and sacrifices are required of our people. Our people can be expected to respond to our call for making a big collective effort only if we can assure them that the burden of sacrifices as well as the fruits of economic prosperity shall be equitably shared among the sections of the people and all regions of the country. To ensure this certain radical changes must be made in the structure of our economy.

We believe that it is imperative to place key areas of the economy including banking and insurance under public ownership through nationalisation. Future development in these areas should take place in the

public sector. In the new order, workers should share in the equity capital and management of industrial enterprises.

The private sector also, in its own sphere, must make their full contribution to the economy. Monopolies and cartels must be totally eliminated. The tax structure must be made truly progressive and drastic restrictions must be imposed on the consumption of luxuries.

Extensive support and encouragement must be extended to small-scale and cottage industries. Such support should include ensuring regular supply of raw materials, such as yarn and dyestuffs, to handloom weavers, at reasonable prices. Marketing and credit facilities must also be made available to them.

Small-scale industries must be developed through co-operatives and dispersed throughout the countryside reaching into the depths of the rural areas so that desperately needed employment opportunities are extended to our rural masses.

Jute has suffered from criminal neglect. A discriminatory exchange rate and parasitic middle-men have denied to the jute growers a fair price. Nationalisation of the jute trade and much greater emphasis on jute research aimed at improving quality and yield per acre will enable jute to make its rightful contribution to our economy.

Cotton needs similar attention, and, therefore, we believe that cotton trade should also be nationalised and measures adopted to improve quality and yield. Our major cash crops—tea, sugar-cane and tobacco—still suffer from appallingly low yields due to neglect of previous governments.

In a 'resource-poor' country every effort must be made to ensure rapid increase in productivity. A fair and stable price to the growers should also be ensured.

Indeed our entire agricultural sector needs to be

revolutionised. The Jagirdari, Zamindari and Sardari systems in West Pakistan must be abolished. The entire land system has to undergo a radical reorientation in the interest of the actual tillers of land. Ceilings must be imposed on landholding. Land above such ceilings and government Khas land must be re-distributed to landless cultivators.

Agriculture must be modernised. The obstacle presented by the fragmentation and sub-division of landholdings must be overcome. An immediate step in the right direction would be to induce the tillers to group their holdings under multipurpose co-operatives. Government could provide effective inducement for this purpose by funnelling through such co-operatives vital inputs, such as irrigation, embankment, drainage, deep tubewells, power pumps, fertilizers, improved seeds, agricultural implements and machinery, credit and instruction in modern agricultural techniques.

As a measure of immediate relief to our peasants, who are groaning under the burden of land revenue, we would abolish land revenue in respect of holdings up to 25 bighas and write off all arrears in respect of such holdings. Ultimately we aim to abolish the present system of land revenue.

Three vital areas which form part of the infrastructure of the economy must be accorded the highest priority. The first is flood control. A comprehensive flood control programme must be implemented on an emergency basis. Measures to prevent waterlogging and salinity in West Pakistan must also be implemented at an accelerated pace.

The next vital area is that of power. There must be massive expansion in power generation and distribution.

An extensive rural electrification programme must be launched to take electricity to the villages, so as to make it possible for small-scale industries to be established.

We aim to attain power generation capacity of 2,500 megawatts in Bengal within 5 years. Every source of power must be harnessed to maximise power generation capacity. The Roop Pur Nuclear Power Project and Jamalganj Coal Project must be immediately implemented. Natural gas must also be fully utilised.

The third vital area is that of transport and communications. The highest priority is accorded by us to the construction of a bridge over the river to enable direct communication to and from North Bengal. Bridges should also be developed over different points on the river Indus in Sind and the Punjab and over the Buriganga, Sitalakhya and Karanphuli.

The development of ports, both seaports and inland river ports, as also roads and railways must be accorded the highest priority.

No investment is as vital for the healthy development of our society as investment in education. It is an alarming fact that the number of primary schools in Bengal has declined since 1947. Only 18 per cent of our population has attained literacy and the number of illiterates is increasing by over one million persons per year. Primary education is denied to more than half of the nation's children. Only 18 per cent of our boys and 6 per cent of our girls complete the first five years of elementary school. We believe that at least 4 per cent of the Gross National Product should be committed to education. The salary of college and school teachers, and in particular school teachers, must be substantially increased. Illiteracy must be eradicated by adoption of extraordinary methods.

A crash programme must be launched to extend free compulsory primary education to all children over 5 years. Secondary education should be made readily accessible to all sections of our people. New universities, including medical and technical universities,

must be rapidly established. Poverty should not be allowed to deprive meritorious boys and girls of the opportunity to pursue higher education. Immediate steps should be taken to ensure that Bengali and Urdu should replace English in all walks of life, while every effort should be made to encourage the development of regional languages.

Turning to the problem of the cities we find low income groups living in sub-human conditions. The so-called improvement trusts have been busy developing luxurious residential areas for the wealthy, while the poor have been left to fend for themselves. Future urban development must concentrate on providing for the needs of the poor majority of city dwellers. Low cost urban housing must be accorded the highest priority.

In the field of health, even a minimum measure of medical relief is denied to over 90 per cent of our population. Immediate measures should be undertaken to establish rural medical centres and a hospital at every thana headquarter. National service in the rural areas should be introduced for medical graduates, and para-medical personnel must be trained in large number to staff the rural health centres.

Industrial workers play as vital a role in the economy as in the people's struggle. Their basic rights to form trade unions to bargain collectively and to strike must be guaranteed. A living wage and the basic amenities, such as housing, education and medical care for themselves and their children must be assured. All labour laws which restrict the basic rights of workers must be replaced. By ensuring that workers are given a stake in the industry, they can be expected to make their full contribution towards increasing industrial productivity. Productivity in all sections of the economy must be increased to the

in global power conflicts. We must, therefore, pursue a truly independent non-aligned foreign policy. We are committed to the immediate withdrawal from SEATO, CENTO and all other military pacts, and to avoid any such involvements in the future. We support the struggle of the oppressed people of the world against imperialism, colonialism and apartheid. In keeping with the principle 'friendship for all and malice towards none', we believe in peaceful co-existence with all states and, in particular, our neighbours.

We believe that normalisation of our relations with our neighbours would be to the best advantage of our people. We, therefore, attach the highest importance to the settlement of our outstanding disputes. We have emphasized the importance of a just settlement of the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the United Nations resolution. The threat of grave and permanent damage to the economy of Bengal posed by the completion of Farakka Barrage must be immediately met. Every effort must be made for a just solution of this problem without further delay.

But these programmes and policies can only be implemented if power is won by the people. Elections will serve as a referendum on basic national issues particularly that of autonomy on the basis of the six-point formula.

The elected representatives of the people alone can give to this country a constitution which will be a durable basis for living together. It is for this reason that we have repeatedly pointed out that restrictions sought to be imposed on the constitution-making powers of the elected representatives of the people are not legitimate. We would once again urge upon the President to repeal the restrictive provisions of the Legal Framework Order. It would also help to create conditions congenial for restoration of democracy if all

pending cases and warrants against political workers, students and labourers, arising out of political activities and out of last year's mass upsurge, are withdrawn, and all sentences imposed in such cases are commuted. All political prisoners detained without trial should also be released.

It is imperative for the security of the nation that our armed forces should not have to carry the burden of civil administration or to have to involve itself in politics. These highly trained professionals should be left free to devote themselves exclusively to the vital task of defending the nation's frontiers.

I would like to end by summing that as a nation we must prove equal to the challenge that faces us. A real living democracy must be established. The different people who make up Pakistan can only live together with a democratic framework. Any attempt to destroy democracy would in the process destroy Pakistan. Justice between region and region must be ensured by granting full regional autonomy to the federating units on the basis of our six-point formula. Within such a federal democracy radical economic programmes must be implemented to bring about a social revolution.

The Awami League has resolved to face this great challenge. We believe that with the support and confidence of the people, which our party enjoys, we shall, Insha Allah, be able successfully to meet the challenge. *Pakistan Zindabad!*

Appendix IV

Mujib's statement dated February 24, 1971 after several rounds of talks with other leaders

Sheikh Mujibur Rehman had insisted on the Awami League's constitutional rights as the majority party. He said :

Consistently with its belief in democratic principles and processes, the Awami League has adhered to the view that vital constitutional issues should be solved, and indeed can only be resolved, through debates and discussions within the National Assembly. In pursuance of this objective, the Awami League has been calling for an early meeting of the National Assembly. It had also made itself available for discussion with every political party and leader.

I, along with my other party leaders, met President Yahya Khan and explained the implications of the six-point constitutional formula, in favour of which the majority of the people of Pakistan had recorded a historic verdict.

Thereafter I met the Chairman of the People's Party, Mr. Z.A. Bhutto and my colleagues had several meetings with his colleagues. We impressed upon them that after the historic verdict given by the majority of the people of Pakistan in favour of the six-point federal scheme, this scheme was now the property of the people.

We expressed our readiness, however, to make necessary clarifications in order to dispel any misgivings they might have about the impact of the six-point scheme upon any of the legitimate interests of Punjab,

Sind, NWFP and Baluchistan or on the viability of the federal Government. The People's Party itself postponed serious and detailed discussions in respect of the six-point scheme on the ground that they would first have discussions with their members in West Pakistan and thereafter return for further discussions.

When ultimately the notice convening the National Assembly on 3rd March, 1971 was issued, it appeared for a moment that the forces of reason had prevailed over the dark conspiratorial forces, which always become active in Pakistan whenever the people are about to take over power through the democratic process.

These anti-people forces had dismissed an elected government in East Bengal in 1954, dissolved the Constituent Assembly in 1955, imposed Martial Law in 1958 and intervened to frustrate every people's movement thereafter.

That these conspiratorial forces however are getting ready to strike once again is seen from the events that have followed since the announcement of the convening of the National Assembly. Mr. Z. A. Bhutto and the People's Party have suddenly started striking postures and issuing pronouncements which reveal a tendency to subvert the constitutional processes by obstructing the normal functioning of the National Assembly.

Yet some of the basic objections now being raised to the six-point programme when carefully examined appear to be nothing but calculated measures to perpetuate the colonial status of Bangla Desh. The colonial exploitation of the 70 million people of Bangla Desh and the transfer of its resources for the benefit of the vested interests of the other wing has been done principally through the control of foreign trade, foreign aid and foreign exchange by the centre.

Thus over 80 per cent of all foreign aid obtained has been utilised for the benefit of the vested interests

of West Pakistan. Over two-thirds of all imports made over the last 23 years have been into West Pakistan. Foreign exchange earnings of Bangla Desh to the extent of over Rs. 500 crores have been utilised in West Pakistan.

Bangla Desh has been used as a protected market of 70 million for the benefit of a handful of the industrialists of West Pakistan, who have been enabled to make gigantic profits. As a result of such ruthless exploitation, the economy of Bangla Desh is in a state of imminent collapse. Haunted by the spectre of famine and denied the bare means of subsistence, the people of Bangla Desh have been reduced to a state of total destitution. We can on no account allow this state of affairs to continue.

Such exploitation would not have been possible unless foreign trade and aid have been with the Centre.

In this background the insistence upon the retention of foreign trade and aid with the Centre appears all too clearly to be designed not to secure the interests of national integrity but to ensure the retention in the hands of the Centre of the principal instruments required for the colonial exploitation of Bangla Desh.

The other objections to the six-point formula which are being raised are designed to create misunderstanding between the people of Bangla Desh and the oppressed people of the Western wing. The six-point scheme does not in any way leave the federal government at the mercy of the federating units, as is insinuated. It clearly contemplates adequate appropriations being made by the federal government of revenue and foreign exchange resources on the basis of express constitutional provisions, which would empower a federal levy on the federating units. This levy would be a first charge on the resources of the units.

Similarly the objection that there would be insuper-

able difficulty in conducting foreign policy by the federal government if foreign trade and aid are left with the federating units, is not genuine. For it has been and again reaffirmed that the power in respect of foreign trade and aid would be exercised by the units within the framework of the foreign policy of the country.

Two points of significance are made. One is the utterly false charge that Awami League is seeking to impose six points upon West Pakistan. The six-point scheme is in essence a scheme for safeguarding the autonomy of the federating units. If the federating units of West Pakistan do not wish to have precisely the same degree of autonomy as Bangla Desh or wish to cede certain additional powers to the Centre or to establish certain regional institutions, the six-point formula does not at all stand in their way. Nor indeed has the Awami League ever taken up the position that the six points could be imposed upon the federating units of West Pakistan. The other point which is strikingly presented is that if Bangla Desh cannot be retained on such terms as it was in the past or such terms as are to be dictated by the minority from the other wing, that is, if it cannot be retained as a colony, and instead if Bangla Desh were to play its rightful role as the majority province then West Pakistan should be 'saved'. But the question is 'saved' from whom and for whom?

Obviously the author would like to see it saved from the Bengalis, who are irrevocably committed to democracy, and it is to be saved for the vested interests of West Pakistan, who would not survive in such a democracy and whose right to exploit the down-trodden masses of West Pakistan should be secured even if they have to lose this 'right' so far as Bangla Desh is concerned!

There should be no doubt in the minds of the

awakened people of Pakistan that the conspirators and the vested interests and their lackeys are embarking upon the last desperate bid to frustrate the adoption of a constitution by the elected representatives of the people and the transfer of power to them.

Their desperation has reached a point where they are even willing to gamble with the existence of Pakistan while pretending to be concerned with national integrity. It is they who are about to inflict a mortal blow on the integrity of Pakistan by frustrating the last opportunity that the people of Pakistan have of evolving for themselves, through a democratic and constitutional process, a basis for living together.

For, this is what a constitution adopted by the National Assembly of Pakistan would be. We still remain prepared to make every effort in that form, to discharge our historic responsibility to give to this country a durable constitution. In this task we invite the co-operation of each and every member of the National Assembly from every part of Pakistan.

Let any would-be despot take lesson from history. We warn the dark forces of conspiracy not to embark on any reckless adventure or to play with the fate of 120 million people. If any one seeks to obstruct or to frustrate the democratic process, it will be the sacred duty of the awakened masses of Bangla Desh, the Punjab, Sind, NWFP and Baluchistan to resist them. I will urge the awakened masses of Bangla Desh to prepare to resist the anti-people forces by every means possible so that they can be rooted out from our soil.

Appendix V

Sheikh Mujibur Rehman's Speech of 7th March, 1971 after a series of unpleasant events had taken place in East Pakistan

Today I have come before you with deep-rooted sorrow and a heavy heart. You all know and understand that we have tried with our best. But the sad aspect is that today the streets of Dacca, Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi and Rangpur have been stained with the blood of my brothers. Today the people of Bengal want freedom, the people of Bengal want love, the people of Bengal want rights. What crimes did we commit? In the elections the people of Bengal totally voted for me and the Awami League. Our National Assembly will be in sitting. We will make the constitution and we will build the history of this land. The people of this land will get economic, political and cultural freedom. But I narrate with grief Bangla Desh's painful history, people of Bengal's bloody history—this blood being the agony of a dying people. History of this land is painful and bloody.

In 1952 we gave our blood. In 1954 even after winning the election we could not attain power. In 1958 Ayub Khan, by declaring the Martial Law, made us slaves for ten years. In 1964 at the time of our six-point programme our boys were killed by bullets. In 1969 after the fall of Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan came. Yahya said he would give a constitution to the country—to which we agreed: after that many histories were made, elections were held. I met President Yahya

*Original in Bengali ; translated by Subrata Mukherjee.

Khan. I, not only as of Bengal, but as a leader of the majority Party, requested him to summon the National Assembly on the 15th February. He did not keep my words, and agreed to Bhutto's request. He said the session would begin in the first week of March. I said all right, we would sit in the Assembly. I said we would discuss in the Assembly even to the extent that if some people would speak the right, even if we happen to be in a majority, in spite of that we would agree to right views even of a single member.

Bhutto came to Dacca and discussed. He said: 'Discussion is not closed, there will be more discussions.' After this we discussed with other leaders; we all should come and sit. We would frame the constitution by discussion. He said, 'If West Pakistani members come then the Assembly would become a slaughter house'. He said, 'All those who will go will be killed, if some one comes to the Assembly from Peshawar to Karachi he will be halted forcibly'. I said: 'Assembly will function'. And suddenly on 12th the Assembly was closed down.

Yahya Khan called the Assembly as the President. I said I will go. Bhutto said he would not. Thirty-five members from West Pakistan came here, after that suddenly it was called off, blaming the people in Bengal, blaming me. The people of the country vocally protested.

I said you observe Hartal peacefully. I said you close all the factories. People responded of their own will; people came out in the streets, pledging to continue the struggle. I said, with money to buy clothes we got arms to defend the country from external enemies; today those arms are being used against the poverty-stricken people of my country—bullets being showered on their chests. In Pakistan we are in a majority—we the Bengalis, whenever we have tried to reach the seat of power, they have come down over us.

I told Gen. Yahya Khan, 'You are the President of

Pakistan: see how my poor people of Bengal are fired upon. How the children were snatched away from the laps of their mothers. How people have been killed, you come and see'. He said, 'I will call the round table conference on the tenth'. I said: 'What will be Assembly sitting for, to whom will we speak? You have taken blood of my people, you want us to talk with them?' In a secret meeting of five hours, they have put all the blame on us, the people of Bengal, and we are held responsible for that.

The Assembly has been called on the 25th, when blood stains are even as yet to go. On the 10th I said that over the blood bath of martyrs the Assembly could not be opened. Army laws and Martial Law must be withdrawn first. The armed forces must be put back to the barracks. There must be thorough enquiry of all the brothers killed. And power must be transferred to the representatives of the people. After this we will think and decide whether we can sit in the Assembly or not. Before this we cannot sit in the Assembly.

I do not want Prime Ministership. I want rights for my country's people. I want to state categorically that from today in Bangla Desh, courts, offices, educational institutions will be closed indefinitely. To prevent the sufferings of the poor, to see that our people do not suffer in the other fields, Hartal will not continue from tomorrow. Rickshaws, carts, railways will move but secretariat, Supreme Court, High Court, session courts, semi-government offices will not function. On the 28th employees will go to take their salaries, if after this salaries are not paid, if there is one single firing, if my people are killed—my request to you all: shape each and every house into a fort. With whatever you have to fight, face the enemy. Whatever is there for life, the streets, etc., everything—even if I cannot command you—you will close. We

will starve them of food and water. You (West Pakistani troops) are my brothers, you live in barracks, none will say anything to you. But do not try to fire anymore. You cannot subjugate seven crore people; when we have learnt to embrace death, none can keep us under subjugation.

And all those who have become martyrs, and have been injured, we from the Awami League will help our best. Those who can, deposit small amounts in League offices, and all those brother workers who have joined in the seven-day strike, to those factory owners will send their salaries. To the government employees, I say, what I say must be observed. As long as my country is not attaining freedom, taxes will not be paid—none will pay them. Listen, remember, the enemy has entered from the back, they will try to create mutual strife amongst us, will go for loot and arson. In this Bengal—all the Hindus and Muslims are our brethren—Bengalis and non-Bengalis—their protection is our responsibility. We should not allow ourselves to be defamed. Remember, employees, if radio does not listen to us then no Bengali would go to the radio station. If television will not give our news, then do not go to the television. Banks will open for two hours so that people can draw their salaries etc. From East Bengal not a single paisa can be sent to West Pakistan. Telephone, telegraph will function in East Bengal and news of Bengal can be sent out. There is an attempt to lynch the people of this land. Bengalis must work with proper understanding. In every village, in every zone, build—under the leadership of Awami League—resistance and struggle movements, and be ready with whatever we have. We have given blood, we will give more blood. This country's people will be liberated. *Insha Allah!* This struggle is our freedom struggle, this time's struggle is struggle for emancipation. *Joi Bangla!*

Appendix VI

Gen. Yahya Khan's Broadcast on March 26 after he left Dacca on the night of March 25 and had ordered Army to 'Do Their Duty'

On the sixth of this month I announced March 25 as the new date for the inaugural session of the National Assembly, hoping that conditions would permit the holding of the session on the appointed date. Events have, however, not justified my hope and the nation has continued to face a grave crisis.

In East Pakistan a non-co-operation and disobedience movement was launched by the Awami League and matters took a serious turn. The events were moving very fast and it became absolutely imperative that the situation was brought under control as soon as possible.

With this end in view I had a series of discussions with political leaders in West Pakistan and subsequently on March 15 I went to Dacca. As you are aware, I had a number of meetings with Sheikh Mujibur Rehman in order to resolve the political impasse. Having consulted West Pakistani leaders it was necessary for me to do the same over there so that the areas of agreement could be identified and an amicable settlement arrived at.

As has been reported in the Press and other news media from time to time, my talks with Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, showed some progress. Having reached a certain stage in my negotiations with Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, I considered it necessary to have another round of talks with West Pakistani leaders in Dacca.

Mr. Bhutto reached there on March 21 and I had a number of meetings with him.

As you are aware, the leader of the Awami League had asked for the withdrawal of martial law and transfer of power prior to the meeting of the National Assembly. In our discussions, he proposed that this interim period could be covered by a proclamation by me, whereby martial law would be withdrawn, provincial Governments set up and the National Assembly divided into two committees, one composed of members of East Pakistan and the other composed of members from West Pakistan. Despite some serious flaws in this scheme in its legal and other aspects, I was prepared to agree, in principle, to this plan in the interest of peaceful transfer of power but with one condition. The condition which I clearly explained to Sheikh Mujibur Rehman was that I must first have unequivocal agreement of all political leaders to this scheme.

I, therefore, discussed the proposal with other political leaders. I found them unanimously of the view that the proposed proclamation by me would have no legal sanction whatsoever. It will neither have cover for martial law nor could it claim to have been based on the will of the people. Thus, a vacuum would be created and chaotic conditions would ensue. They also considered that the splitting of the National Assembly in two parts through a proclamation would encourage divisive tendencies that may exist. They, therefore, expressed the opinion that if it is intended to lift martial law and transfer power in the interim period, the National Assembly should meet to draft an interim Constitution Bill and present it to me for my assent. I entirely agreed with their view and requested them to tell Sheikh Mujibur Rehman to take a reasonable attitude on this issue.

I told the leaders to explain their views to him that

his scheme (whereby on the one hand you extinguish all source of power and martial law and on the other fail to replace it by the will of the people in the National Assembly) will merely result in chaos.

They agreed to meet Sheikh Mujibur Rehman and explain the position and try to obtain his agreement to the interim arrangement for the transfer of power to emanate from the National Assembly.

The political leaders were also perturbed over Sheikh Mujibur's idea of dividing the National Assembly in two parts right from the very start. Such a move, they said, would be totally against the interests of Pakistan's integrity.

The Chairman of the Pakistan People's Party at the meeting between myself, Sheikh Mujibur Rehman and him had also expressed similar views to Mujib.

On the evening of March 23 political leaders who had gone to talk to Mujib on this issue called on me and informed me that he was not agreeable to any changes in his scheme. All they really wanted me was to make the proclamation whereby I withdraw martial law and transfer power.

Sheikh Mujibur's decision of starting his non-cooperation movement is an act of treason. He and his party have defied the lawful authority for over three weeks, they have insulted the Pakistan flag and defiled the photograph of the father of the nation. They have tried to run a parallel Government, they have created turmoil, terror, insecurity and a number of murders have been committed in the name of the movement. Non-Bengali brethren and others who have settled in East Pakistan are living in a state of terror and are fleeing for fear of their lives.

The armed forces in East Pakistan have been repeatedly subjected to taunts and insults of all kind. I wish to compliment them on the tremendous restraint

that they have shown in the face of grave provocation. Their sense of discipline is indeed praiseworthy. I am proud of them.

I should have taken action against Sheikh Mujib and his collaborators weeks ago, but I had to try my utmost to handle the situation in such a manner as not to jeopardise my plan for a peaceful transfer of power. In my keenness to achieve this end I kept on tolerating one illegal action after another and at the same time was trying to arrive at some solution. I hardly mention the efforts made by me and by the various political leaders to get Mujib see reason. We have left no stone unturned but he has failed to respond in a positive manner. On the other hand, he and his followers kept on flouting the authority of the Government even during my presence in Dacca.

The proclamation that he proposed I should make was nothing but a trap. He knew that it would not have been worth the paper it was written on and he could have done anything with impunity. His obduracy and his absolute refusal to talk sense make one to conclude that the man and his party are enemies of Pakistan. They want East Pakistan to break away completely from the country.

We will not let some power-hungry, unpatriotic people destroy this country and play with the destiny of 120 million people.

In my address to the nation on March 16, I had told you that it is the duty of the Pakistan armed forces to ensure the integrity, solidarity and security of Pakistan. I have ordered them to do their duty and fully restore the authority of the Government.

In view of the grave situation that exists in the country today, I have decided to ban all political activities throughout the country. As for the Awami League it is completely banned as a political party. I

have also decided to impose a complete Press censorship. Martial law regulations will very shortly be issued in pursuance of these decisions.

In the end, let me assure you that my main aim remains the same, namely, transfer of power to the elected representatives of the people. The sooner the situation permits I will take fresh steps towards the achievement of this objective.

It is my hope that the law and order situation will soon return to normal in East Pakistan so that we can again move forward towards our cherished goal.

I appeal to my countrymen to appreciate the gravity of the situation for which the blame rests entirely on anti-Pakistan and secessionist elements.

Appendix VII

SEMINAR Organised by Citizens' Council, Delhi, on August 27, 1971, on 'Mujib's Trial—A Farce'

West Pakistan has no legal or moral justification in putting Sheikh Mujibur Rehman on trial for 'treason'. The lawyers and jurists of Delhi were unanimous in describing the trial of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman as a 'loaded trial violating all canons of justice as practised by civilised countries of the world and a flagrant outrage of the Charter of Human Rights'.

Initiating the discussion, A. N. Mulla, a retired judge of Allahabad High Court, said humanity at large was helpless at the denial of basic human rights to Sheikh Mujibur Rehman by the military junta of Pakistan as far as his farcical trial was concerned. Under the UN Charter of Human Rights, to which Pakistan was also asignatory, Mujib was entitled to defend himself and ask for an open trial.

'We do not know of the charges levelled against Mujib. Nor do we know where he is being kept, the state of his health, or the place of his proposed trial. We also do not know if Mujib has agreed to engage the former Pakistani Law Minister Brohi as the defence lawyer.

'The world was watching with interest the two big international trials taking place. One was the trial of Mujib in Pakistan by Yahya Khan and the other was of former UAR Vice-President Ali Sabry for his

“attempt to overthrow” the regime of President Anwar Sadat’.

Comparing the two trials, Mulla said that in the trial of Sabry the world knew the specific charges levelled against him and the process and place of trial as well. But in the case of Mujib the world did not know anything specific.

Discussing the charges of treason against Mujib, Mulla said Mujib’s demand for autonomy for Bangla Desh was well intentioned. By this he wanted to ameliorate social and economic conditions of his countrymen as he felt that under the prevailing system the people were being exploited by the West Pakistani rulers.

He said the charge that Mujib was responsible for the large-scale bloodshed that followed the military crackdown on East Pakistan after March 25 could also not be levelled against him as he had been arrested by then. Moreover, Mujib had all along been adopting non-violent methods of civil disobedience during his ten-day talks with President Yahya Khan in Dacca. The genocide in Bangla Desh could not be left without condemnation simply because Pakistan had said that this was its internal affair. If the United Nations and international public opinion could raise their voices against apartheid in South Africa, which is also an ‘internal affair’, then certainly the genocide was also not an internal affair of West Pakistan. Mulla said that the Sheikh could not be said to be a traitor to his country. The demand for independent Bangla Desh was voiced after the military crackdown. The Sheikh could not be held responsible for what happened then because he was in prison. The trial was a violation of the UN Charter of Human Rights which guaranteed basic rights to every individual. He said that military trial of a civilian leader who had secured

an over-whelming majority at the elections was ridiculous. The verdict would be one dictated by Gen. Yahya Khan.

M.C. Setalvad, the former Attorney General, who presided, said that the trial of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman is nothing but an attempt to put the Sheikh to a 'judicial death'. All civilised societies believed that a fair trial should have a minimum of three pre-conditions: The trial should be conducted by an impartial tribunal, it should be open to public and the defendant should be allowed to have a lawyer of his choice. None of these conditions existed in the case of Sheikh Mujib's trial. Even in the case of INA trial, the British had allowed Indian leaders to plead for the officers charged with treason. Members of the public were allowed to attend the proceedings.

Setalvad saidm any countries had written to Yahya Khan urging him to hold a fair and public trial of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman. There is a glimmer of hope that the opinion of the civilised world would have some influence on General Yahya Khan. Though the present trial would be completed let us hope that the sentence passed shall not be executed. To restrain Yahya Khan from carrying out this design, he said, 'world public opinion should be aroused against the genocide in Bangla Desh'.

C.B. Agarwal, a retired high court judge, said the trial should be considered in the context of the accepted principles of justice and the UN Charter of Human Rights and not according to any arbitrary law that Pakistan's rulers may have created. A secret trial was not legal. It was being conducted by a military junta which had already declared the Sheikh as a traitor. The Sheikh had not been allowed a lawyer of his own choice. There was nothing to show that Mr. Brohi who had been deputed to defend him was acceptable to him. Even

if Sheikh Mujibur Rehman demanded an independent Bangla Desh it could not be construed as treason. East Bengal was never contemplated as a part of Pakistan by those who conceived Pakistan. In 1936 the Muslim League under the Presidentship of Jinnah passed a resolution stating that East Pakistan would be autonomous. He asked if Mujib's demand for complete autonomy for Bangla Desh was an act of treason, then why did Yahya Khan allow him to contest and win the elections on his six-point programme which was made public much before the elections? Mujib never demanded separation, he wanted only autonomy within the framework of a federation of Pakistan.

Dr. W. S. Barlingay, a senior Supreme Court advocate, said it was not in the declaration of Human Rights but in the observance of it that made the country a worthy member of the comity of nations. Pakistan had clearly violated the spirit of declaration and therefore deserved to be condemned. One should not forget that Pakistan was a signatory to the UN Charter and was consequently under a legal obligation to conduct the trial in accordance with these rights. Every person had a right to a public hearing. He said there was no possibility of the Sheikh getting a fair trial because the prosecution was also the judge. It was obligatory for all UN members to implement the Charter of Human Rights. The Charter was not merely a declaration but had legal sanctions behind it.

Dr. L.M. Singhvi, an eminent lawyer, said that even the charges against Sheikh Mujibur Rehman had not been made known. It was not a trial but 'a relapse into primitive barbarism'. Singhvi said that the best thing India could do was to arouse international opinion against this farcical trial. India had already done a lot towards this end and it remains to be seen what international opinion could achieve.

Among those who attended and spoke were the Citizens' Council President and former member of Parliament, Kanwar Lal Gupta, Delhi Mayor Hansraj Gupta and another former member of Parliament, Manohar Lal Sondhi.

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